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**ОТ МЕТОДИЧЕСКОЙ ПОДДЕРЖКИ К
АКАДЕМИЧЕСКОЙ КАРЬЕРЕ – ПРОБЛЕМА
ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНОЙ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ ВО ВРЕМЯ
ОРГАНИЗАЦИОННЫХ ИЗМЕНЕНИЙ
(КЕЙС ЯЗЫКОВОГО ЦЕНТРА БРИТАНСКОГО
УНИВЕРСИТЕТА)**

За последние пять лет некоторые университеты Великобритании внедрили контракты на академическое образование (АЕР), в основе которых лежат принципы лидерства, педагогики и финансовой поддержки для стимулирования и продвижения по службе сотрудников административно-методических отделов, выполняющих преподавательские обязанности. В то время как коллегам рекомендовалось заключать новые контракты на уровне департамента, регламент был противоречивым и двусмысленным. Многие методисты, переведенные на контракты АЕР, сообщали о сложностях в подаче заявления, нечетких карьерных перспективах, возросшей нагрузке и проблеме профессионального самоопределения, в основном из-за появившегося академического компонента. Новизна контракта АЕР и неофициальные свидетельства о нагрузке, возлагаемой на лиц, берущих на себя новые обязанности, выявили пробел в знаниях о конструировании профессиональной идентичности управленцев среднего звена британских университетов во время реорганизации. В данном исследовании будет рассмотрена ранее неисследованная область деятельности

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административно-методического состава университетских языковых центров, выполняющего преподавательские обязанности. Несмотря на похожие опасения по поводу организационных изменений, участники исследования заявляют о своей идентичности по-разному. Они разделяют взгляды или возражают доминирующим социальным и организационным дискурсам, таким как дискурс нового менеджериализма, подчеркивая особенности и культурные различия в профессиональном самоопределении. Исследование основано на концепциях образовательного лидерства, управлении среднего звена и организационных изменений. Хотя полученные результаты не могут обобщаться вне контекста данного исследования, они могут иметь значение для лиц, ответственных за образовательную политику в Великобритании.

Ключевые слова: образовательное лидерство, организационные изменения, управленцы среднего звена в образовании, дискурс и конструирование идентичности, нарративная идентичность и дилемматическая идентичность

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**FROM PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT TO ACADEMIC
PATHWAY – NEGOTIATING PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN
A TIME OF ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE (CASE STUDY OF
TWO MIDDLE MANAGERS AT A UK UNIVERSITY
LANGUAGE CENTRE)**

In the past five years some UK Universities have introduced the Academic Education Pathway contracts (AEP), incorporating the elements of leadership, teaching and scholarship for recognition and promotion of professional services staff with teaching responsibilities. While colleagues have been encouraged to apply for the new contracts at the departmental level, the University policy guidelines have been conflicting and ambiguous. Many newly AEP transferred departmental middle managers have reported stress related to the application process,

uncertainty about career progression, increased workload, and professional identity regulation largely due to the element of research added to the new role. The novelty of the AEP contract and the anecdotal evidence of the burden placed upon the individuals experiencing role incongruity has identified the gap in the knowledge of professional identity construction of UK University middle managers at a time of contractual organisational change. This study will investigate the previously unresearched area of University Language Centre managers with teaching responsibilities. Despite similarities in experiencing organisational change, the participants of the study make different identity claims aligning or resisting the dominant societal and organisational discourses, such as the discourse of New Managerialism, thus highlighting the nuanced and culturally specific approach to professional identity negotiation. The study is framed by the concepts of Educational Leadership, Middle Management and Organisational Change. While the findings may not be generalized beyond the context of this study, the implications can be significant for UK Higher Education policy makers.

Key words: Educational Leadership, Organisational Change, Middle Management in Education, Discourse and Identity Construction, Narrative Identity, and Dilemmatic Identity

Introduction

The close link between professional development, teaching and research in university education has been its' foundation for intellectual substance. This, however, has been a subject of controversy in UK University policy making since the 1970's due to teaching and research being considered as separate activities competing for state funding (Hughes & Tight, 1995) and favouring research over teaching (Taylor, 1995).

The tension between teaching and research has been further exacerbated since the introduction of Teaching Quality Assessment in 1992, which applied generic quantitative performance indicators without considering individual institutions or addressing the wider context of student experience. As well as creating the "compliance culture" – complying with external demands at all costs, the Teaching Quality Assessment put further pressure on the institutions to address the equality of teaching and research.

Although there was a positive movement toward recognising the need for equal partnership, individual departments show discrepancy in either research or teaching quality with research performance being easier to measure (Quality Assessment Reports, 1994). Thus, despite the increased profile of teaching in recent years, research output remains the main factor for career progression (Drennan, 2001). Therefore, several mechanisms for reinforcing the link have been suggested, including student-centred research activities, and using teaching practice as a research subject (Hughes & Tight, 1995, Kareva, Rasskazova & Lenotjev, 2022).

Driven by the need to achieve better synergy between teaching, research and management, the University policy towards improving teaching practices, assessment and curriculum design, students' experience and professional support has been widely implemented. However, the pursuit of turning teachers into academics has been problematic. On the one hand, the educational developers are often not affiliated with the School of Education but included in a stand-alone support unit linked to managerial structure (Blackmore & Wilson, 2005). On the other hand, due to the contractual differences, research has not always been a part of the teacher's identity.

To resolve this tension UK Universities implemented the 2004 strategic plan to make research part of professional practice by locating it within a Graduate School or Educational Academy with the main objective to facilitate the identity shift from teacher only to teacher-researcher by raising the profile of research through accreditation, such as the Higher Educational Academy Fellowship, increasing the funding for pedagogic research and building stronger scholarly connections between researchers and teaching fellows (Macfarlane & Hughes, 2009).

However, the divide between teaching, leadership and research continues to exist, challenging the academic identity of lecturers torn between different organisational structure of research and teaching (Reid & Petocz, 2003), forging new academic identities by developing teaching through research and research through enquiry-based teaching.

Academic Education Pathway – a solution or a problem?

Part of the Universities' strategy to bridge the gap between teaching, research, and leadership has been the launch of the Academic Education Pathway (AEP) scheme, which included the transfer from professional to AEP contracts to include elements of education, education-related

scholarship, and leadership. However, while the scheme was meant to reward and promote non-academic staff by adding research to their contract, many have reported identity control (Alvesson et al., 2008) against the discourse of New Managerialism (Hill & Kumar, 2009). This has been particularly evident in the context of the University Language Centres, which are uniquely positioned outside the traditional departmental structure, as both academic and non-academic, teaching only departments.

While the Language Centres' leadership have encouraged middle managers with teaching responsibilities to apply for AEP contracts, there has been resistance and low uptake in applications due to a laborious application process, increased workload, lack of financial incentives or clear guidelines and no successful outcome guarantee, leading to professional identity struggle (Preston & Price, 2012) because of role ambiguity (Schulz, 2013). The experience of the Language Centres' middle managers performing a hybrid role of educational leaders, teachers, and scholars (Whitchurch, 2008) at a time of organisational change remains unknown with no studies into identity work resulting from transitioning from professional to academic pathway contracts.

For organisational change to be successful and for the AEP contract to become a reward, not a punishment, for middle managers, one needs to acknowledge the importance of their role as agents of change within the organisation, acting as a medium between staff and senior management (Schein, 2010). Therefore, this study is timely, important, and potentially significant for university policy makers.

The case study is set in the previously unexamined context of a UK University Language Centre, aiming to explore the tension between professional identity negotiation and organisational change. Although drawing on a limited data set, the study will contribute to the knowledge of professional identity construction of middle managers in a localised setting by addressing the following research question:

How is the middle management's professional identity constructed during organisational change in the culturally specific context of UK University Language Centres?

Materials and methods

Paradigm rationale

This study has been framed by constructionist ontology, interpretivist epistemology and qualitative methodology to enable the data to emerge

through interactive positioning of the researcher and the participant, while acknowledging subjective stance of the researcher.

The strengths of the paradigm are in credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability through existing scholarship. While the credibility can be questionable due to multiple and contradictory interpretations of data with limited generalisability due to the specific research context and reduced confirmability due to small sampling, these limitations are outweighed by applicability of results due to resonance, researcher's reflexivity, trustworthiness of data through contextual verisimilitude and researcher's enhanced agency through the membership of the researched community.

Approach

The chosen case study approach fits the small-scale enquiry due to the elements of self-reflection and the researchers' bias creating polyphony between the researcher and the researched. The study has also been framed by narrative inquiry approach with small story being the site for identity construction where the dilemmatic identity (Bamberg, 2011) is co-constructed interactively by the narrator and the researcher.

This method provides the most detailed investigation of the meaning through explicit and implicit identity claims, allowing for in-depth analysis of contradictory, inconsistent and ambiguous elements of the story told at the given time and space. This approach has the potential for developing educational theory and policy change.

Sampling and data collection

The data was sampled from two participants – Victoria and Elena (pseudonyms) - middle managers with teaching responsibilities, identified as Deputy Team Leaders (DTLs), who have recently transferred from Professional to AEP contracts.

The data was gathered through unstructured interviews with each participant lasting for 60 minutes using minimalist-passive interview technique, prompting elicitation of meaning. The interviews were recorded via Teams, transcribed, and read twice for data immersion.

Analysis procedure

The readings of the transcripts ensured thematic analysis, followed by positioning analysis as the main analytical tool chosen for self-reflective integration of researcher's intellectual and emotional agency. While Elena's narrative could be segmented into small stories as most telling identity formation highlights, Victoria's narrative was more-free

flowing, marked by linguistic resources to achieve an emotional dramatic effect.

The analysis was carried out at three levels: positioning in relation to the characters within the story or the story world; positioning in relation to the interlocutor/researcher and in relation to dominant discourses or master narratives (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008). The first two levels of positioning through interaction reveal the positioning of the narrator as either complicit or countering dominant discourses.

The elements of the analytical model by Labov and Waletzky (1997), consisting of abstract, orientation (time, place, participants, setting) and evaluation embedded in the complicating action, resolution and coda (relevance), used to outline the narrative structure and highlight the linguistic strategies for identity negotiation at the first level of analysis. This research contributes to the development of positioning analysis as an investigative instrument.

Ethics and Insider research

The study complies with research ethical principles of minimal harm, informed consent, and the right to withdraw from the process, following the guidelines for using Teams for data recording and storage. I also acknowledge the internal ethical constraints, such as relationship with the participants, insider knowledge and potential professional conflicts and consequences for the participants. Thus, I used a sensitive approach to personal data, guided by my moral responsibility.

While membership in the same professional community and commonality of our backgrounds enhances my perspective as an inside researcher, I acknowledge my subjective bias and its' impact on the data. I have included only essential data in the analysis to prevent the participants being recognised.

Theoretical background

Conceptual/Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The study is framed by three interrelated concepts – professional identity construction, middle management in education and organisational change. The theories underpinning this conceptual framework are – Narrative approach to Dilemmatic Identity, Professional Identity and Organisational Culture and Professional Identity in a time of organisational change.

These concepts will be defined and explained through the relevant literature while emphasising the need for further research into the area of middle manager's identity construction against organisational change.

Narrative Approach to Dilemmatic Identity

This study is framed by the narrative poststructuralist approach to educational identity which views identity as fluid, shifting and subject to contextual change, positioning and being positioned by other agents, while constructing identities interactively through culture and language (Bucholtz & Hall, 2022).

The narrative approach considers identity as dilemmatic: being stable yet changing, being unique yet the same as others and being agentive yet constrained by the broader discourses (Bamberg, 2011). Despite considerable scholarship on the narrative approach to dilemmatic identity, there is a gap in research on professional identity construction against the discourses of middle management and organisational change in specific educational contexts.

Professional Identity and Organisational Culture

The current research considers professional academic identity through the interplay between culture and socialisation, participating in multiple communities of practice, viewed through a poststructuralist lens as multiple, conflicted, constructed and negotiated through social and political discourse. However, there is a lack of an explicit approach to the definition of professional identity in Higher Education (Trede et al., 2012).

Professional identity interacts with organizational culture, recognized as a system of shared values and beliefs (Owens & Valesky, 2011), developed, and confirmed by both leadership and staff. Thus, organisational change is only possible if it is managed well through full understanding of the implications and anxieties that it may cause (Schein, 2010).

Organisational culture is also subject to change due to societal context (Staber, 2013). While supporting the values of the faculty, there are values fostered by individual departmental cultures (Alvesson et al., 2008), sustained at the departmental level (Knight & Trowler, 2001) and initiated by staff, rather than by senior management. This study is situated within the unique culture of the Language Centre.

The organisational discourse of change in the post-1992 UK Universities has been accompanied by the change in managerial culture,

increase in students' diversity and numbers, staff contractual restrictions and greater accountability for both teaching and research. The tension between the New Managerialism (consumer orientated, performativity-based structure) and traditional academia has been reflected in the dilemmatic professional identity claims of being collective versus individual, academic versus administrative, inclusive versus exclusive, stable versus subjected to change (Bolden et al., 2008).

Thus, there is a need for better understanding of 'reluctant managers' (Scase & Goffee, 2017) performing hybrid roles (Whitchurch, 2008) without managerial skills or experience, following rather than influencing the university strategy while being perceived as supporting managerialism by their colleagues, which leads to a further identity struggle and isolation (Preston & Price, 2012). Further studies have revealed the blurring of identity boundaries and the shift towards more unstable and diverse interdisciplinary identities, emerging in the space between the professional and academic domains (Gordon & Whitchurch, 2010), beyond institutional and across intersectoral boundaries (Henkel, 2005).

The tensions within the hybrid professional identity have been compounded by the deeper personal identity changes, brought about by external factors such as change of institutional culture, technological innovation and role expectations (Briggs, 2007; Billot, 2010; Linaker, 2023), resulting in role ambiguity (Schulz, 2013), related to new pedagogical challenges, broadening the gap between provisional (Ibarra, 1999) and institutional selves (McNaughton & Billot, 2016), leading to disempowerment, identity conflict and regulation.

The study also explores the teaching aspect of professional identity, based on moral integrity, care and support for students, ethical research and high-quality teaching (Fitzmaurice, 2013), contributing to an authentic teacher's identity, supported by professional practice and group identity (Trede et al., 2012). Recent research reveals tension between professional values and institutional identity caused by organisational change (Winter, 2009).

The educational leadership theory also feeds into the research question, framing leadership identity as post-heroic, agentive, pedagogically innovative, distributed, collaborative, and working towards the common goal (Northouse, 2016). At the same time individuals can experience role incongruity, identity regulation, control,

emotional labour, and management (Alvesson et al., 2008, Hochschild, 2012).

Further studies highlight professional identity construction against organisational discourse, placing conflicting demands on the academics, who struggle to make choices between their professional duties (or “oughtness”), such as service to students, collegiality, high standards of teaching and scholarship, and the increasing managerial pressure of performativity leading to identity crisis and distress (Calvert et al., 2011).

However, there are claims refuting correlation between the changing internal (organisational), external (policy) and personal circumstances and professional effectiveness. Some positive trends have been identified through the analysis of changing culture in Departments of Education, indicating the gradual development of academic capital with equal value of teaching and research (Deem & Lucas, 2007).

Understanding professional identity as a narrative, in which personal and professional are closely intertwined can reveal challenges individuals face when confronted by institutional changes, including job security, academic mobility, choice and opportunity, while making contradictory claims of agency and disempowerment, leading to identity loss or resistance (Fitzmaurice, 2013).

Professional Identity in a time of Organizational Change

Further research into professional identity explores the notion of resilience and care in response to the organizational policy change (Smith, 2010), with middle managers balancing between the roles of academic managers and managed academics supporting or resisting the culture of professional academic values in the result-driven environment, developing hybrid identities (Winter, 2009). The need to combine research, teaching and managerial responsibilities has created tension between perceived, imagined, and prescribed identity (Billot, 2010).

The organisational change has triggered further transformation of professional identity from administrative to managerial, becoming more dynamic, complex, and fluid (Delanty, 2008), emerging as cross-boundary or unbounded professionals, creating new knowledge and developing new projects outside the remits of their roles through the process of professionalization (Whitchurch, 2008).

The Academic Education Pathway (AEP) reflects the universities’ response to the demanding socio-political and economic environment, resulting in the new hybrid professional identity formation with research,

teaching and managerial elements. How is the new identity shaped by resisting or conforming to the discourse of organizational change and what is the true value of this transformation? Recent research reveals that newly transitioned colleagues can experience a backlash by being referred to as “third way” academics (Whitchurch, 2008).

Other studies critique the AEP transitional policy for its inconsistency, lack of clarity regarding what constitutes education success in all three elements of the education triangle – teaching, pedagogic scholarship, and education leadership, and implying that higher level promotions to a professorship are only possible through career manipulation, thus undermining the integrity of this organizational change (Khusainova, 2023). This study uncovers further tensions between leadership identity formation and organizational change, thus providing valuable resource for policy making implications.

The reviewed literature has demonstrated the gap in the knowledge of the intersection between leadership, identity, and organizational change. This study also contributes to the current research in educational middle manager’s identity construction (Netolicky, 2021), while focussing on the specific and previously ignored area of the University Language Centre.

Study and results

Analysis

Victoria and Elena construct their professional academic identities signposting the transition from Professional to Academic contracts coming across the discourses of change, uncertainty, trust, life/work balance and managerialism at certain narrative turns, highlighting the dilemmatic and agentic aspects of their identities through implicit and explicit claims (Bamberg, 2011).

The analysis has revealed the recurrent problem of identity regulation and identity control (Alvesson et al., 2008), instigated by organizational change. Each interview starts with a question: “How do you feel about your recent transition from Professional services to Academic contract?” to reveal the challenges of the process.

The key themes that the two narratives have in common are the uncertainty, lack of clarity about the transition and the implications for their professional identity. However, there are contrasting differences in their positioning due to their professional backgrounds and career expectations: Elena has been an experienced scholar before she joined

the Language Centre several years ago and has a strong academic background; while Victoria came from educational management and upholds ethical leadership and teaching values (Calvert et al., 2011) above scholarship. Thus, the comparison in their positioning is woven into the narrative analysis. The section below presents the three levels of positioning analysis.

Positioning level 1: positioning against story actors

Change of label or change of role?

Elena:

Elena's interview starts with an abstract stating her agentic positioning as an academic, wishing to be recognised as such by other actors:

I've always been an academic because I have a PhD and I was a professor before and therefore... I thought that would be a very good way of returning to what I felt I was.

Despite the lack of support and uncertainty regarding the outcome, marked by the modifier "probably", Elena positions herself as a confident actor in the resolution:

I thought OK I'm going to conferences and I'm still publishing and if I can just demonstrate that what I publish has an impact on the students then probably I will get it.

In the coda Elena is hopeful that her perceived academic identity will become her real one (Winter, 2009). However, this feeling is downgraded by the reference to her workload, which is not adjusted to her new role, while she continues to do her research at the weekends, thus displaying the tension between the imagined and the prescribed identities (Billot, 2010):

I'm hoping that I will also have the time to continue my research within my workload and not in the weekend as it was and still is.

Elena evaluates the University management's positioning as remote and bureaucratic, repeatedly referring to key themes – lack of clarity and uncertainty:

It was lack of information, lack of transparency on the part of the management.

However, she distinguishes between the University and the Department management, as confirmed by other studies of the departmental organisational culture:

I think there was encouragement from my Direct Line manager ...because they knew me.

Elena does not report identity struggle, claiming an easy transition to the academic contract, comparing the new contract to the new label. She downplays the career progression factors by repeatedly using the neutral, non-emphatic adjective “nice”. Thus, she identifies herself as a self-driven, intrinsically motivated academic, whose agency is not limited by external factors:

Nice to have the recognition and the allocated time for these activities.

However, the comparison of her former role with that of a cleaner or a secretary signals identity loss:

Professional services are probably cleaners or secretaries..., so for me it was a bit strange to be teaching at a university level and then being considered professional services.

Victoria:

In contrast to Elena, Victoria positions herself non-agentively towards the organisation. However, unlike Elena, she identifies herself more with the organizational values, subscribing to the collective identity, using “we”, “we all” and “collective approach”, as in the orientation:

I just felt if I don't do it, I would be left out. So it's an impact of a collective approach we all took and we all felt that it is necessary for us.

Victoria's identity regulation is caused by time pressure, lack of support, fear of rejection and unrealistic deadlines. The complicating action comes at the time of the assessment:

It requires a lot of time, ...especially, that the rejection will not be a good thing.

It was very stressful ...especially that the deadline was in the middle of our very, very high season in terms of assessment.

The support wasn't there at all, so ... it was very stressful.

Just like Elena, Victoria is overtly critical towards managerial discourse of bureaucracy, however, unlike Elena, she maintains her group identity “us” versus “them”:

They didn't make the process easy for us and I think it's all to do with bureaucracy here, ..., they had to have something in between to justify the move and to make it difficult.

Victoria performs professional success agentively through critical reflection on her career expressed metaphorically as “blowing your own trumpet”. Compared to Elena’s neutral positioning as a “nice recognition”, Victoria’s stance is more emphatic, as signalled by “wow”, “huge” and “big”.

Some people are not good at blowing their trumpets, to say wow, because you had to go through these sorts of things. So, there is a huge, big element of self-reflection.

Future is a big concern.

Elena:

The change in organisational policy from discouraging to encouraging everybody to apply for the AEP contracts has caused further identity stress for Elena, who qualifies the change as “radical”, emphasising its’ impact metaphorically as “navigating a storm”:

I mean, things change so radically, like I’ve gotten used to the storm and I think I will navigate it.

The metaphor reflects her dilemmatic struggle with external forces of chaotic organisational discourse. The resolution is lacking in hope, confirming her role unpredictability (McNaughton & Billot, 2016) and positioning her as a “reluctant manager” (Scase & Goffee, 2017), overpowered by managerialism.

It’s very unclear what I’m going to do.

It’s a big concern.

Her positioning against the organisational discourse as “us” and “them”, confirms middle manager’s identity manipulation (Preston & Price, 2012):

Sometimes we’re teachers when it suits them, but we’re also management when it suits them,

Despite her confident academic stance, Elena positions herself as an insecure middle manager in a “hybrid role” (Whitchurch, 2008), overpowered by the fear of delegating some management duties to her staff, making her role “meaningless”. She struggles with the idea of distributed leadership (Fletcher, 2014), as expressed through the intensifier “very”:

we are just hybrid teachers and nowadays it’s not even clear what we’re going to do because some teachers apparently are going to do some admin as well.

it’d be very difficult, I think it would be very, very poor organization.

While countering the discourse of uncertainty, she reports identity struggle as revealed in her “hard work” reference:

I'm trying really hard to do things above my role.

Thus, in the evaluation Elena positions herself as a managed academic (Winter, 2009) against organisational discourse of change, highlighting her role incongruity, as expressed emphatically through the intensifier “absolutely”:

nothing changed for me.

Absolutely nothing.

I haven't seen any concrete improvement in my workload.

Victoria:

Unlike Elena, Victoria identifies strongly with her leadership and teaching identities:

not only I'm lecturing, but I'm actually managing a course which has a higher value in in what you are doing.

Her dilemmatic identity is revealed through her uncertainty regarding career progression, which resonates with Elena’s feelings:

It's not an automatic thing to move from one grade to another.

An academic manager or a managed academic?

Elena:

The story illustrates Elena’s transition from an autonomous to a managed academic restricted by the departmental hierarchy of power and the New Public Management ideology with clear lines of subordination and an “us” versus “them” culture (Davis et al., 2014).

It starts with an abstract summarising her “managed academic” stance, as reflected in the passive structure.

I've been trained like that in the past six years.

The orientation contextualizes her autonomous positioning in the previous job:

Before I came here, I had been working as the coordinator at my own office and I was completely autonomous.

The complicating action illuminates the duality of her identity, confronted by managerial discourse in her current job:

So the first task I had to do was to decide whether a teacher was right over another teacher. And then I said..., just arrange it between yourself.

But no, there were a lot of rules to be checked and lots of procedures to

be implemented, so I realized that it wasn't just me deciding, but there was a whole structure to be involved.

The resolution for her was to “adjust” or regulate her identity and to conform to the new managerial culture. The passage illustrates her dilemmatic identity struggle wanting to act agentively yet submitting to the organisational discourse.

Elena reflects on the current situation, when her role has changed again from a manager/teacher to the hybrid role, which will require reverse adjustment and more identity regulation. She is conflicted by the fear of making mistakes through the loss of shared responsibility on the one hand and is excited about creative opportunities and independent work on the other hand.

Now I have to become autonomous again.

I think that structure is good because it protects you in a way, so there's always someone else who's responsible. I think I'd like to be free in the projects that I run and are somewhat creative.

In the evaluation she sums up her identity as an “accidental” leader, dismissing her leadership role as “admin”, not trusting others and preferring to work autonomously. Her agency as an independent academic comes to the fore in this narrative.

I don't like working in groups so much. Maybe I believe in my own ideas and I don't believe in other people ideas, that sounds terrible, but when it comes to admin, it's good to have a structure because there are so many layers that need to be taken care of. I think when it comes to creative projects, I'm happy to have agency.

Victoria:

Victoria constructs her hybrid identity in contrast to Elena, more as an academic manager, than a managed academic, while still reporting identity regulation and emotional labour (Iszatt-White, 2009). She is constrained by her lack of scholarship experience:

I feel I don't have that great experience of the research world.

Her sceptical positioning towards research goes as far as the claim of it being detrimental to teaching, reinforced through the repetition of the qualifier “valuable”:

The research may well take us away from valuable time, valuable time that we need to give to the students.

Victoria's leadership identity is more distributed (Fletcher, 2004) and collaborative (Northouse, 2016), compared to Elena's. Unlike Elena, she aspires to empower her team by giving them managerial responsibilities, recognising the value of each team member, metaphorically describing leadership as "a bird's eye":

We really need to have a bird's eye looking at all these things, not only just one directional thing, but we have a team, different personalities in the team.

Her identity reflects the ethical leadership principles (Northouse, 2016) which can have an impact on the organisational values with a strong moral compass (Rintoul & Goulais, 2010). Victoria recognises the performative aspect of the newly formed AEP identities for herself and for her colleagues:

The one good aspect of this AEP contract is people will start to reconsider their roles and act as a lecturer, not just take the title and be happy with it but act as one.

Positioning level 2: positioning against the interlocutor

At level 2 positioning (self in relation to the interlocutor) both Elena and Victoria perceive me as an empathetic figure. They index their agreement, reiteration of statements, confirmation of opinions and positive evaluations throughout the narrative. This empathetic disposition allows for the confidential and trustworthy dialogue.

Elena:

When asked to elaborate on the way her experience shaped her identity, Elena refers to her cultural and personal identity aspects being enacted through the context and leading to agentive acts, described metaphorically:

There were lots of doors that you just needed to push.

She further constructs her identity through intersection between personal, cultural, and professional aspects by evaluating professional over personal, referring to professional as hobbies, thus blurring the boundaries between the two:

I think the weekend is also part of the workday. Some of these projects I also quite like personally, so I sort of see them as hobbies.

She downplays her identity as a wife, aligning herself with the postfeminist neoliberal discourse of choice (Gill, 2014):

I only have a husband and he's pretty low maintenance.

However, comparing her position with that of colleagues from other departments, she appears resentful of the constraints the new role places on her, thus creating the tension between real and imagined identity (Billot, 2010) and putting her between the two greedy organisations – the academia and the management (Morley, 2013):

My colleague has a day for research, and I don't have anything. So that means.... the weekend.

Further interaction reveals her role ambiguity and the workload intensification (Morley, 2013), compared to a similar role in a research-led department:

We work very much like a company, so our structure is like always ask my line manager for permissions to do things. But other academics they are a lot freer in the way they use their time.

Thus, she positions herself critically towards the new role, referring to it as Class B or third space academic (Whitchurch, 2008):

The idea is when you're a lecturer, you do the things as other lecturers do.

So we're not Class B lecturers.

Thus, through interactive positioning, we reveal Elena's conflicting identity work – being in and at the same time out of control of her life/work balance, making contradictory claims of submitting to hierarchical managerial structure and longing for autonomy at the same time, thus projecting a dilemmatic figure of being constrained by the New Managerialism, referring to the department as a “company” and to herself as “Cinderella”.

The interactive element has helped to delve deeper into the intersectional and contradictory nature of her professional identity.

Victoria:

Victoria seeks confirmation of solidarity with me, as expressed in the repetition of “we” in reference to our collective identity as educational managers:

We manage teachers, we manage courses and we also teach.

On the one hand, she identifies herself strongly with the organisational values, proclaiming the in-group identity and on the other hand she resists the change, questioning the organisational values, presenting the dilemmatic out-of-group identity (Taifel & Turner, 1978; Bamberg, 2011):

The quality of teaching has nothing to do with research. As such, it has to do with experience and development.

Victoria seeks validation of her efforts in applying for the AEP:

I had to go and knock on our colleagues' doors to seek their advice.

The metaphor of “knocking on doors” resonates with Elena’s “pushing doors” to gain access to professional success.

Through interactive positioning Victoria co-constructs an authentic leadership identity with a high level of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2004).

Positioning level 3: positioning against global discourses and research question

The key discourses which co-construct Elena and Victoria’s hybrid identities as middle managers operating in a teaching-led department are categorised as New Managerialism (Hill & Kumar, 2009), Organisational culture, and Organisational change.

Elena and Victoria start their journey from different departure points. While Elena has an established academic identity, Victoria aligns herself with educational leadership and teaching, rather than research. While both experience the change in organisational culture through the introduction of the AEP contracts, they do not align with the same professional values. Finally, their experience of transitioning from professional to AEP contracts is also different due to the historic change of the organisational culture (Staber, 2013) from discouraging to supporting the transition.

Both Elena and Victoria construct their professional identities against the discourses of uncertainty and insecurity, displaying varying degrees of trust in senior management, linguistically signalling their non-alignment with the dominant institutional managerial discourse through reference to “us” and “them”, revealing tension between promotional aspirations and self-doubt. However, Victoria’s stance against the discourses of New Managerialism and Organisational Change is less agentive than Elena’s, as she looks for support from her colleagues, constructing the in-group identity while aligning with the departmental organisational values.

Unlike Victoria, Elena acts more agentively by resisting the discourse of bureaucracy and discouragement, building her academic portfolio and taking on additional responsibilities to ensure her promotion, balancing between academic manager and managed academic (Winter, 2009),

while resisting being perceived as a Class B lecturer or third space professional (Whitchurch, 2008). The two participants construct their leadership identities differently: while Elena aligns with a postfeminist discourse of autonomy (Gill, 2014), Victoria performs a post-heroic leadership identity, of influencing others to achieve pedagogic excellence.

However, both experience identity regulation, identity control (Alvesson et al., 2008) and emotional labour (Iszatt-White, 2009) due to the New Managerialism discourse, resulting in unmanageable workloads and unsustainable work/life balance (Morley, 2013).

Conclusion

The findings from both sets of data confirm that Victoria and Elena's hybrid identities as leaders, teachers and scholars are shifting, conflicting and dilemmatic in the context of organisational change. Despite different agentive claims, they are both confronted by the discourses of New Managerialism, uncertainty, lack of understanding and trust in organisational values tipping the power balance towards the organisation, leaving the individuals feeling powerless and not in control.

These findings concur with previous studies, reflecting the institutional neglect towards middle management by organisations. If we assume that the culture of the organisation should be both espoused and enacted by senior, middle managers and staff (Schein, 2010), there needs to be a way of empowering the middle managers to develop their leadership and academic skills, particularly in times of organisational change, such as transitioning to AEP roles. Thus, a more individualised, nuanced approach to academic leadership is needed to overturn the hierarchical managerial culture as a controlling "us" versus "them" mechanism (Davis et al., 2014).

This conclusion resonates with previous research into middle managers, organisational culture and New Managerialism (Davis et al., 2014). However, the element of identity construction transitioning from professional to academic role is novel and needs further investigation to make the findings more generalizable.

This study adds to the body of research on professional identity in education by giving voice to the underrepresented group of middle managers in Language Centres revealing their agentive and non-agentive positioning within the discourses of New Managerialism, Organisational

Culture and Organisational Change, using narrative as an emancipatory tool. The implication for professional practice is finding ways of supporting middle managers and enabling them to facilitate organisational change by revealing the barriers to their professional identity construction. The recommendation for further research is to obtain comparable data by increasing the sample and by replicating the study in other University departments for better understanding of identity construction through discursive practices.

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**ОПЫТ КОГНИТИВНОГО ПОДХОДА К АНАЛИЗУ
МЕТАФОР (НА МАТЕРИАЛЕ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ВОЕННО-
МОРСКОГО ЯЗЫКА ДЛЯ СПЕЦИАЛЬНЫХ ЦЕЛЕЙ)**

⁷ Массалина И. П., Сорокина Э. А. 2023



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