



Shifting Feminisms: Collaborative or Individualized Managers? An Exploratory Study in Three UK Universities.

Journal:	<i>Gender in Management: an International Journal</i>
Manuscript ID	GM-12-2017-0179.R3
Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	feminists, Senior managers, neo liberalism, Middle managers, collaborative, individualization

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Shifting Feminisms: Collaborative or Individualized Managers? An Exploratory Study in Three U.K. Universities.

Abstract

Purpose

This paper seeks to shed light on how a group of feminist managers/ leaders, in education and social studies departments, a notably under- explored and under-theorised group, 'do power' in the increasingly corporatized education marketplace.

Design/ methodology/ approach

The research draws on the narratives of a small group of feminist women who hold authority positions at middle or senior levels. It interrogates data from ethnographic interviews and participant observation carried out as part of an in-depth narrative inquiry (Andrews, et.al.2008) in three higher education institutions in the United Kingdom

Findings

From a small sample such as this any findings are necessarily tentative. Nonetheless, findings suggest that, whilst taking account of individual differences in styles, there has been a shift, over time, in the ways that the management role is approached by these feminist women. Analysis of the data also reveals that gendered expectations remain for those who carry the 'feminist' label and asks whether these expectations are realistic.

Research limitations/ implications

Drawing on data from a small sample group raises questions about what can and cannot be claimed. However, along with Maguire (2008), my purpose is not with generalisability, but seeks to explore issues and open up further areas of study.

Originality/ value

Original empirical research which explores an under-researched group of women, namely feminist managers and leaders in university education and social studies departments, as they negotiate the challenges of working within the neo liberal academy and, to varying degrees, try to remain true to their feminist values and beliefs.

Key words

Collaborative, feminism, feminist, individualism, leadership, management, neo- liberalism, new managerialism.

Introduction

This paper seeks to shed some light on the perceptions and experiences of a group of feminist managers and leaders who work in the academy in departments of education and social studies.

These women are carrying out their management roles in a context which has, over time, become increasingly subject to neo-liberal policies and practices and regulated by government imperatives.

Much has been written about women managers in the academy in general, (Kanter, 1993; Marshall, 1995; Tomlinson, 2005) to name but a few. Some commentators like Thomas and Davis (2002) explore how managerialism has influenced individual women academics' day to day experiences and their professional identities. However, with notable exceptions, (Broadbridge and Kerfoot, 2010; Orser, Elliott and Leck, 2011; Bendl and Schmidt, 2012; Coleman, 2011; Fitzgerald, 2014), there has been less of a focus on feminist managers and leaders. Less attention still has been paid to feminist women who have social justice issues at the heart of their practice (Maguire, 1993; Acker, 1996; Thompson, 2017) and who carry out their management roles in university departments which are a particular focus of reform.

As I have argued elsewhere (Thompson, 2017:105):

Education has become a focus of a reform movement, the underpinning reason for which is the perceived need to respond to the demands of a competitive global economy by improving the skills and knowledge of young people.

This is part of a wider reform of the public sector which began in the late 1970s with the introduction of neo-liberal policies and practices, defined by Clarke and Newman (1997) as a strand of New Right ideology which focuses upon the importance of market individualism. As a result, as Ball, Goodson and Maguire (2007: ix) inform us:

Policies began to proliferate and seethe around education... to control, delineate, specify or require of education and educators that they 'reform'.

1 In neo- liberal regimes, which have replaced a more benign way of working, issues of equality and
2 social justice have become increasingly marginalized (McNamara and Menter, 2011). As Menter
3 (2011:13) puts it, 'matters of equity and ethics may well have slipped down the research agenda
4 since the late 20th Century'. For those in authority positions who endorse discourses related to
5 equality, working in a climate where academic cultures have become 'increasingly competitive,
6 individualistic and managerial' (Mauthner and Edwards, 2010:483), and where equality issues are
7 not a priority, the struggle to act in accordance with these discourses becomes increasingly difficult.
8 Just as policies and practices related to the public sector are undergoing radical change, so
9 theories related to feminism have shifted over time. It is likely that the women in this sample group,
10 who span several generations, will have been influenced by the dominant feminist discourses in
11 play as they have assumed authority positions at different stages of neo- liberalism from its onset to
12 the present day.

13 This paper is important to the academy in general, and journals that deal with issues of gender and
14 management specifically, because it provides a forum for the voices of an under-researched group
15 as they manage, and are managed, (Bendl and Schmidt, 2012), whilst negotiating an onslaught of
16 reform measures which impact specifically upon their fields. Swan (2010: 664) points out:

17 As feminist activism and theorizing changed, ... Gender in Management has reflected some
18 of these [changes], although... there are areas which are under -discussed [and]
19 researched.

20 This is one such area.

21 The aims of the paper are as follows:

22 1. to investigate the lived experiences of a small under-researched group of feminist women
23 managers and leaders who work in university departments specifically targeted by reform
24 strategies.

1
2 2. To investigate whether the introduction of neo- liberal policies and practices into these
3
4 departments have impacted on the ways that these feminist managers and leaders carry out their
5
6 roles.
7

8
9 3. To investigate whether feminist management and leadership practices have shifted over time to
10
11 accommodate neo-liberal imperatives.
12

13 This paper is seen through a set of critical lenses, which reflect the interplay of four major
14
15 influences. These are critical analysis of policy changes, namely the insertion of neo-liberal
16
17 imperatives into university policies and practices; an exploration of issues related to women,
18
19 leadership and management with particular emphasis on feminist managers and leaders; shifts in
20
21 feminist theoretical perspectives and issues related to qualitative work.
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27 **Changing Working Practices in the Neo- Liberal Higher Education Workplace**

28

29 Clarke and Newman (1997) inform us that neo- liberalism is a strand of New Right ideology which
30
31 focuses upon the importance of market individualism. As they (ibid: 14) put it:
32
33

34 Neo-liberal economists in Britain and the USA stressed the supremacy of markets as
35
36 mechanisms of social distribution of goods, services and incomes.
37

38 One of the prime tools of neo-liberalism is new managerialism which, as Ball (1999:1) points out is
39
40 accompanied by an audit culture of 'performativity' that is the use of targets and performance
41
42 indicators to drive, evaluate and compare educational 'products'. It is argued that new ways of
43
44 management are key to driving these imperatives forward.
45
46

47 The terms management and leadership need clarification.
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50 Kotter (1990:6) argues that:
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52 Management is concerned with planning and budgeting, establishing detailed steps and
53
54 timetables for achieving needed results and then allocating the resources necessary for
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1 making that happen. Leadership is more concerned with establishing direction, developing a
2 vision of the future, often the distant future, and strategies for producing the changes needed
3 to achieve that vision.
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8 It could be argued that under neo- liberal regimes, there is limited scope for leaders to implement
9 any vision that differs from corporate policy. However, under new managerialist regimes, as
10 management is seen to be the way forward, there has been a great expansion in managerial roles.
11 The inroads of market forces and new managerialist practices have radically changed the ethos and
12 practice of public sector professions including higher education. Deem (2004:241), in an analysis of
13 the practices of what she terms manager-academics in UK universities, notes that:
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22 Academic work in the UK is... in flux as global and local factors change the funding, remit
23 and accountability of higher education institutions... Public funding is in decline, external
24 audits of teaching and research quality are widespread... and there is considerable growth in
25 student numbers.
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31 In a climate of reduced funding, students have become clients as institutions are forced into
32 competition over a diminishing crock of gold. Under such regimes, management is seen as crucial,
33 however, the notion of what it is to manage, and lead, has shifted. Person centred approaches have
34 largely given way to a focus on economic efficiency (Thompson, 2015). Furthermore, Skelton (2005:
35 88) argues that:
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43 ... new managerialist practices in universities are nudging, if not forcing, staff towards
44 'self-interested' (i.e. individualized) positions through which they understand, negotiate and
45 carry out their work lives.
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50 *The Particular Case of Education and Social Studies*

51 Within neo-liberal regimes, the knowledge of young people, particularly those training for public
52 sector employment, is tied increasingly to the economy and its content closely monitored and
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1 audited by inspection regimes such as the Ofsted¹ and QAA². Much of this training now takes place
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3
4 'on the job' as money is transferred from the universities to professional placements in partnership
5
6 arrangements.
7

8 The need to be compliant with a 'plethora of government policies' (Ball, Goodson and Maguire,
9
10 2007), constant inspection and audit (Morley, 2003), has led to a massive upswing in bureaucracy.
11
12 This leads to particular challenges for those who work, manage and lead these departments.
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18 **Women, Management and Leadership in the Contemporary Higher Education Marketplace**

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20 Within the literature that considers neo-liberalism and new managerialism from a gendered
21
22 perspective, different perspectives are apparent. Studies by Reay and Ball, (2000); Acker (2005);
23
24 Leathwood and Read (2009); Coleman (2011) and Thompson (2015) indicate that career prospects
25
26 for some women academics, including those who work in higher education, are improving,
27
28 particularly at lower levels. Some see this as an opportunity for women, (Currie, Harris and Thiele,
29
30 2000), whereas others, (Thompson, 2017), sound a warning that management in the current climate
31
32 is akin to doing the housework for others.
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36
37 Bagilhole and White (2013: 3) make the point that:

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39 ... whereas women are over- represented at the lower levels of the academy, this has not
40
41 translated into women's representation in the more influential academic positions.
42
43

44 While this is undoubtedly the case, senior women are represented in the small sample group
45
46 discussed in this paper. It is important not to make essentialist claims about the experiences of all
47
48 women in leadership positions. In her study of women leaders, Fitzgerald (2014: 11) makes the
49
50 point that their stories highlight that:

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52 ... leadership is contextual, personal and adaptive. That is, leadership is enacted in different
53
54 ways according to circumstance, space and time. Women do not 'do and perform' leadership
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1
2 in uniform ways and their everyday experiences and practices are as varied as the women
3
4 themselves.
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6 **Female Managers/ Feminist Managers?**

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8 It is important not to conflate the term 'woman manager' with 'feminist woman manager'. As
9
10 Edwards (2000) points out, not all women managers are feminists and neither do all women
11
12 endorse feminist principles in the carrying out of their management or leadership roles.
13

14
15 There is a danger of endorsing an essentialist position that 'women in power' must mean a move
16
17 towards good feminist/ social justice practices. This may not always be the case.
18

19
20 As Morley (1999:75) argues:
21

22
23 Female cannot be unilaterally equated with feminism, nor are all feminists reflexive about
24
25 their location in organisational power relations. Furthermore, a process of 'masculinisation'
26
27 can occur for 'successful' women.
28

29
30 Furthermore, Mavin, Grandy and Williams (2014:447) point out that there are '... gendered
31
32 assumptions that women hold of sisterhood and solidarity relationships between women (Mavin,
33
34 2008) which may not always exist'.
35

36
37 Championing women's issues by leading on the 'woman in management' label is not a mainstream
38
39 strategic role valued by organisations... Simply the threat of being labelled as such leaves some
40
41 senior women feeling uneasy.
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44 Nonetheless much ground has been gained by feminist academics and managers (Swan,
45
46 2010:662) even though, as will be explored in the next section of the paper, the once unifying
47
48 discourse of what it means to be a feminist has changed over time.
49

50 ***Shifting feminisms***

51
52
53 As Weiner (2006:81) points out, 'conventionally, we have come to understand feminist history in
54
55 stages or waves'. This section of the paper, briefly, considers some of the main feminist theories
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1
2 which may have informed the thinking of the different generations of feminist managers in the
3
4 sample group.
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6
7 Second wave feminism, which began in the 1960s, tended to be divided into three major strands,
8
9 namely liberal feminism (equal opportunities), radical feminism (anti-sexist) and socialist (Marxist)
10
11 feminism. It looked at aspects of women's lives such as reproduction, domestic violence, and
12
13 women's employment. As Walkerdine and Ringrose (2006:31) point out:
14

15
16 What such work held in common was a tendency to see gender identities as fixed and to see
17
18 girls/ [women] as an homogenous group.
19

20
21 However, by the early 1980s the unifying subject of 'woman/girl' was being problematized. Over
22
23 time, feminism became more fractured and the assumption that feminists could speak for all women
24
25 on the basis of their shared womanhood and oppression was exploded (Mirza 1997). As Weiner
26
27 (1994: 24) commented:
28

29
30 Sadly, I have come to realise that the 'sisterhood' that was so celebrated in the 1970s is
31
32 possibly more imaginary than real and that women can be divided by class, ethnicity, religion
33
34 etc. as they are bound together by shared experiences of, say, domesticity and motherhood.
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36

37
38 From the mid-1990s, third wave feminism challenged essentialist notions associated with the
39
40 second wave, and poststructuralist perspectives took issue with the notion that identity is fixed and
41
42 argued against 'the notion of a coherent and fixed individual subject' (Walkerdine and Ringrose
43
44 2006:32). Thus, third wave feminism seeks to reduce or remove the oppressions of essentialising
45
46 discourses which would position all women, and for that matter, all men, in particular ways.
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50 Dillabough (2006: 53) informs us that:

51
52 ... many post-structuralist feminists used this critique to expose the difficulty in identifying
53
54 'girls'/ [women] as a single category of analysis.
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1
2 Martinez Aleman (2014: 107) points out that:

3
4 Feminist educational scholars have been relatively quiet on the growth of managerialism in
5
6 the university and its impact on gender equity.
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8
9 As a result, our understanding of how feminists 'do management' in contemporary times is limited.

10
11 Much of the research that exists on feminism, leadership and management focuses on the
12
13 challenges and tensions of putting feminist principles into practice because, as Mauthner and
14
15 Edwards (2010: 483) put it:

16
17
18 Feminism is about collectivity, social equity and social change, an anti- hierarchical political
19
20 position. Management, by contrast, tends to represent control, authority relations and
21
22 conservatism.
23

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25 This can provide a challenge to many, although not all, feminists in authority positions who favour
26
27 consultative and collaborative ways of managing and leading (Acker, 2012; Blackmore, 1999).

28
29 Some feminist academics (Blackmore, 1999; Morley, 1999 and Thompson, 2015) take the view that
30
31 new managerialism has a particularly negative impact on those, often feminists, who endorse
32
33 people centred management discourses and who are committed to social justice. A view supported
34
35 by Mauthner and Edwards (2010:483) who state:

36
37
38 Our argument is that by rendering academic cultures increasingly competitive, individualist
39
40 and managerial, new managerial reforms in higher education over the last two decades have
41
42 intensified those very aspects of academic life that feminists have long struggled with:
43
44 competition, individualism and hierarchical management structures.
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47
48 Swan (2010:664) however points out that in the current neo-liberal climate:

49
50
51 For some feminists, feminism is so mainstreamed that the radical potential of feminism has
52
53 long gone. This has resulted in a bland version of its old self, with feminism now working in
54
55 hoc to neo-liberalism.
56

1 Bendl and Schmidt (2012:490-491) argue that under present neo-liberal regimes, equity issues
2 have an emphasis on advancement for individual women in the workplace rather than any form of
3 political action. As they state:

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9 Gender equality responsibility seems to be more promotion and market- driven than to be a
10 core issue of the decision makers in terms of advancement of gender equality... the feminist
11 collective has lost its political edge.
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14

15 To support gender equality in the workplace, initiatives such as the Athena SWAN Charter
16 (Scientific Women's Academic Network), run by the Equity Challenge Unit, was introduced in 2005.
17 Athena SWAN originally focussed upon the STEMM subjects (science, technology, maths and
18 medicine. In 2015 it broadened its remit to include Arts, Humanities, Business and Law and
19 professional support staff and became known as Advance HE Athena SWAN Charter. Athena
20 SWAN claims to address a full range of equality issues including the underrepresentation of women
21 in senior roles, the gender pay gap and tackling gender discrimination related to trans people.
22 Athena SWAN states that it recognises that to concentrate on individuals is not enough and it is
23 important to address structural and cultural changes and address intersectional issues. However,
24 Finlayson (2015:1) sounds a warning that, despite their stated intentions, initiatives such as Athena
25 SWAN focus on individuals and do not address context and structural issues. Finlayson (ibid.)
26 argues:
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43 The danger is that liberation movements end up being absorbed into the very structures and
44 practices they are meant to oppose or end up mimicking those structures and practices.
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47 Loyalty to the organisation is seen as more important than loyalty to colleagues and a value shift
48 amongst some managers prioritises corporate loyalty rather than loyalty to their teams. As Davies
49 (2003: 91) puts it, the imposition of new managerialist discourses has led to a 'death to critique and
50 dissent', which sits uneasily with those who seek to empower and give voice to others. These
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1
2 managers are likely to find themselves caught in a web of competing discourses, some of which are
3
4 at odds with their personal and political ethos. As Morley (2001:120) points out:

5
6 Caught between the state, employers, the market, industry, student/ consumers and the
7
8 wider economic concepts of globalization, employability and international competitiveness,
9
10 universities and academics in Britain are struggling with a hybrid identity that can be
11
12 demoralising and confusing.
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14

15
16 This is the educational climate in which the feminist women managers, whose stories form the basis
17
18 of this paper, are carrying out their roles.
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21

22 **Theoretical framework**

23
24 This paper is written from a feminist perspective, and the changes in feminist theory over time have
25
26 been documented earlier in this paper. On my journey through feminist theory I have increasingly
27
28 found the insights offered by feminist poststructuralism useful. At the same time, whilst recognizing
29
30 differences between some women, as well as the similarities between some men and women, I do
31
32 not seek to fracture the experience of women to such an extent that there is a denial of any material
33
34 reality.
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37

38
39 Although there is no single definition of feminist research, it can usually be said to be underpinned
40
41 by emancipatory aims, defined by Assiter (1996: 84) as aims dedicated to 'removing oppressive
42
43 power relations'. Although there are many unresolved tensions between feminism and
44
45 poststructuralism, a number of feminists who recognize its usefulness have tried to resolve or
46
47 circumvent these incompatibilities. Francis (1999:8), whilst continuing to acknowledge the fact that
48
49 there remain many unresolved theoretical questions related to the compatibility of feminism and
50
51 poststructuralism, points out:
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1 ... while we may agree that theoretically the self is constituted through discourse, we still feel
2 ourselves to have agency, moral obligation, and preferences for different kinds of discourses;
3
4 and that creating narratives to structure or describe our lives, is part of being a human
5
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7
8
9 subject.

10
11 The insights provided by the work of Foucault (1980), concerning discourse and power relations, the
12 arguments advanced by feminist poststructuralism, the work of Bourdieu (2000) concerning
13 'habitus,' 'field' and agency allied to Beck's (1992) model of the 'individualized individual', and Du
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Gay's (1996) concept of the self-driven entrepreneur, have been particularly useful in developing my
theoretical position. This is grounded in the material experiences of women managers and leaders
but nonetheless recognizes the power of dominant discourses in shaping the world in which these
women operate. It also recognizes diversity amongst, and differential power relations between, the
social actors in the study as well as the fact that these categories are relational.

The Research: Methodology and Method

34 This piece of writing examines research data drawn from a subset of a wider study carried out in ten
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institutions in the UK in Departments of Education and Social Studies. The research sits within what
Silverman (1993: 21) defines as the interpretive tradition of social science, which he sees as
concerned with concepts of social construction in meaning. Within this tradition, qualitative methods
are used to generate meaning. From the onset, the project was subject to the normal university
ethical procedures including the completion of a comprehensive ethics form and a consent form for
all its participants.

50 This paper is written from the standpoint of an insider researcher in that I am a manager in one of
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the education departments. The way that I am positioned within the research poses a number of
theoretical and methodological challenges. As an insider researcher I have an in-depth knowledge

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2 of the sector, its problems and the day to challenges and dilemmas faced by its managers.
3

4 However, whereas on the one hand my 'insider' status provides useful insights that may have been
5 missed if I had been more of an 'outsider', I did run the risk faced by researchers who are 'complete
6 participants' of 'going native' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000).
7
8

9
10 The question also arises as to how to validate the results of value informed research but, as Coffey
11 and Delamont (2000: 124) note:
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13

14
15 ... a feminist discourse of the nature and process of social research discounts the myth that
16 research can ever be neutral or 'hygienic'. Feminist perspectives contribute to the
17 demystification of social research, making problematic the stance of the researcher and the
18 researched as unattached and objective. Instead research is recast as personal, emotional,
19 sensitive, reflective and situated in existing cultural and structural contexts.
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28 The interpretive approach resonates with my position as a feminist researcher who seeks to gain
29 insight into the challenges, dilemmas and tensions faced by feminist managers in the current
30 climate. The data are presented through the different voices of the individual women as they talk
31 about being a feminist manager and working with those who name themselves as feminist
32 managers, in market led times. Narrative research favours a qualitative approach to data gathering
33 and, '... attention is directed to the 'trustworthiness' of field notes and transcripts of... interviews'
34 (Webster and Mertova, 2007: 5). The methods employed were in - depth ethnographic interviews
35 (Spradley, 1979; Bryman, 2004) and participant observation. Bryman (ibid: 113) points out that the
36 term ethnographic interview is a term which is synonymous with unstructured or intensive interview
37 in which:
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51 The interviewer typically has only a list of topics or issues, often called the *interview guide* or
52 '*aide-mémoire*', that are typically covered. The style of questioning is usually informal. The
53 phrasing and sequencing of questions will vary from interview to interview.
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2
3 The interviewees were approached directly and asked if they would be prepared to take part in the
4 research. They were given a consent form which they signed. The interviews took place in a variety
5 of places chosen by the respondents and lasted on average forty-five minutes although this varied
6 according from respondent to respondent.
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11
12 Participant observation was carried out at one of the institutions. In many ways I was more of a
13 'complete participant' than a 'participant as observer', a state described by Cohen, Manion and
14 Morrison (2000: 311) where:
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19
20 ... the researcher adopts the values, norms and behaviours of the group as her own, i.e.
21 ceases to be a researcher and becomes a member of the group.
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23
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26

27 Complete observers usually go 'under cover', a stance which brings inherent ethical problems such
28 as the potential for deceit. However, in my case my colleagues knew that I was carrying out
29 research.
30
31
32

33 34 ***Constructing the Sample Group for this Paper***

35
36 This paper focuses on data collected at three of the ten original institutions. The sample group was
37 constructed because seven women, who self-identified as feminists work in those institutions.
38
39 Although the women didn't specifically state how they interpreted the term, clues as to how they
40 enacted their feminism came from observations, how they represented themselves and what was
41 said at interview. For example, three women publish in the field of gender, some had a visible
42 presence on social media where they promoted gender equality, and others spoke openly about the
43 importance of including equality and diversity in their teaching.
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2 Even within such a small sample different levels of management positions are represented ranging
3
4 from middle management positions such as route and programme leaders³ to senior management
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6 positions of Head of School/ Department or Dean of Faculty.
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9 Six of the seven women were interviewed. The seventh woman, Diana, for a variety of reasons,
10
11 was not. Diana had been a member of the original interviewing schedule but as a senior member of
12
13 staff she had institution wide responsibilities which often took her away from the Campus. It proved
14
15 impossible to find a convenient time to carry out an interview, however, because of her well-known
16
17 feminist stance, and because of the expectations that others held of her as a feminist in a senior
18
19 position, she remained in the sample group.
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21

22
23 The age profile of the women ranged from early forties to mid-sixties and this age variation was an
24
25 important element in the construction of the sample group as the insertion of neo-liberal discourses
26
27 may have impacted on these managers and leaders differently. Some would have been more likely
28
29 to have experienced older and, arguably more benign, ways of working whereas others would have
30
31 always carried out the management task at a time when neo liberal discourses were firmly
32
33 embedded within the academy.
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36
37 I have borrowed the terms coined by Skelton (2005) and call women in their mid-fifties and older
38
39 'Vintage Feminists' (VF), and the women below this age 'Younger Feminists' (YF). Three of the
40
41 sample group hold senior management positions and four are middle managers³. All these women
42
43 seek to maintain a socially just environment, however, in the current educational climate, they are
44
45 faced with having to work with sets of alternative and 'alien' discourses (Blackmore and Sachs,
46
47 2007).
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51 The institutions represented in this small sample are all post 1992 universities (see foot notes).
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Table 1. The Respondents.

Name (pseudonym)	Type of Institution and pseudonym	Academic/ non academic	Management position/ level	Age ('vintage' or 'young')	University Dept
Rosalyn	post 1992 ⁴ Fallowfield University	academic	senior	vintage	education
Cynthia	post 1992 ⁴ St Bedes University	academic	middle	vintage	education
Diana	post 1992 Riverside University	academic	senior	young	wider university
Brenda	post1992 Riverside University	academic	middle	vintage	education
Pamela	post 1992 St Bedes University	academic	senior	young	social studies
Caroline	post 1992 St Bedes University	academic	middle	vintage	social studies
Kate	post 1992 St Bede's University	academic	middle	young	social studies

Analysing the data

Analysis of the data was based upon what Glaser and Strauss (1967: 6) have called 'grounded theory', that is:

Generating a theory from data [which] means that most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research.

This approach fits with the social constructionist perspective defined by Epstein (2012:20) as a process where:

1 ... truth is constructed by social processes, is historically and culturally specific, and is in part
2
3
4 shaped through the power struggles within a community.'

5
6 The data were subjected to critical coding and analysis, (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 102).

7
8
9 Theorisation and writing were fed back into the data collection to enable progressive focussing and
10
11 the identification of themes and issues.

12
13 As has been discussed earlier, it is acknowledged that this is a very small sample group, however,
14
15 like Maguire (2008:477):

16
17
18 My concern is not with generalisability: rather, it is to start to explore issues... therefore
19
20 opening up potential areas of focus and questions for further study.

21
22 As will be seen in the next section of the paper, the data arising from analysis of interviews and
23
24 participant observations revealed a nuanced picture of the struggles experienced by, and the
25
26 expectations held of, the feminist managers and leaders in the sample. What also became apparent
27
28 was that there was a tendency amongst younger senior feminist managers to privilege the needs of
29
30 the institution, and their own role within that, rather than offering support to their female colleagues.
31
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36 **Rosalyn's Tale (VF)**

37
38
39 Rosalyn, a senior woman at Fallowfield University (pseudonym) was tasked with introducing new
40
41 efficiency procedures to her institution and was conflicted by having to enforce what she termed a
42
43 'harsher regime' than she would have once employed. As Rosalyn put it:

44
45
46 There were staff redundancies to manage, which was not what I came into education to do... the
47
48 redundancies, the constant inspection, the constant Ofsted on your back, the constant 'you name it,
49
50 it's got to be audited'. So there was the external climate that was becoming increasingly
51
52 regulatory... and it doesn't take a mathematician to work out that the more you pay to schools, the
53
54 less money you've got and the more you've got to make staff redundant.
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1
2 Having to comply with these directives left Rosalyn, as she said, 'scarred for life' (field notes). She
3
4 had always employed what she felt to be a democratic management style and had sought to
5
6 empower members of her team. As she said:
7

8
9 One of the first things that I'd done was create a management team to make it more
10
11 democratic, and some of these people I'd worked with, they were my friends. I had close
12
13 personal relationships with them... and come this job [it was] 'you're the Head of Department,
14
15 you're paid to do this... We are behind you', but about twenty million miles.
16

17
18 Rosalyn equated her discomfort at working within new managerialist regimes specifically to a
19
20 conflict with her political standpoint. Her disquiet was linked to her inability to reconcile the
21
22 discourses of social justice with a new political agenda. Rosalyn described herself as 'on the left
23
24 and feminist' and found the way that she was now positioned, as a senior manager in the
25
26 educational market place, to be intolerable. Rosalyn summed up her position:
27

28
29 I think there is one thing to be a feminist, I think there's quite another to be in a position
30
31 where you can enact feminist values. I don't know, given the hugely competitive environment
32
33 within which we are trying to survive, I don't know where the spaces are to massively
34
35 reconstruct the cultures... My response was, of course, to leave.
36
37

38 39 **Cynthia's Story (VF)** 40

41
42 Cynthia's story provides an example of the way that policy, practice and principles intersected to
43
44 cause a situation where a feminist manager with over twenty years of management experience was
45
46 finally overwhelmed by the struggle to carry out her management role in an increasingly alien
47
48 situation in the education marketplace. The dictates of government policy resulted in demands from
49
50 senior managers to carry out practice in a way that Cynthia felt to be wrong and an assault on her
51
52 deeply held principles about what it means to be an educator and a manager. This is her story.
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1
2
3 Cynthia describes herself as a feminist who has the discourses of social justice embedded in her
4
5 politics and practice. She has experienced first- hand the sea changes that have occurred in
6
7 education almost from their inception. The increased pressure from senior managers to 'perform' in
8
9 the education marketplace began to wear Cynthia down and to produce in her a cynicism about the
10
11 increasing performativity culture that was invading the institution (Morley 2003).
12
13

14 Ball (1999:1) argues that one of the prime tools of neo-liberalism is new managerialism which is
15
16 accompanied by an audit culture of 'performativity', that is the use of targets and performance
17
18 indicators to drive, evaluate and compare educational 'products'. It is argued that new ways of
19
20 management are key to driving these imperatives forward.
21
22

23 Cynthia changed jobs to a management role in Continuing Professional Development (CPD)⁵, a
24
25 move, which she hoped, would be less controlled and which would give her more opportunity to
26
27 enact her own educational philosophy, which incorporated a commitment to academic work and to
28
29 social justice.
30
31

32 ***A Critical Incident***

33
34
35 In a climate where teachers' CPD has become increasingly closely linked to School Development
36
37 Plans⁶, which are in turn linked to the latest government's dictates, the need for the university to
38
39 provide only courses that were tailored to the needs of schools, became of paramount importance
40
41 for Cynthia's managers. The Head of the Education Department had instructed Cynthia to
42
43 investigate a complaint from a teacher about one of Cynthia's team. The Head of Department told
44
45 Cynthia:
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48
49 Get rid of her...I don't give a damn about HR or employment law. We must not upset the
50
51 teachers, we need them and they could ruin our reputation if they think we are ignoring their
52
53 complaints.
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1
2 Cynthia felt that she was trapped by being compelled to act in a way which was an affront to her
3 principles. She became ill and, unable to reconcile one 'alien discourse' too far, left the Department
4 of Education.
5
6

7
8 These first two narratives recount the dilemmas face by two Vintage Feminists who have struggled
9 to come to terms with carrying out their management role in a climate which demands that they
10 behave in ways which are alien to their philosophies. The next section of the paper focuses on the
11 expectations of two feminist middle managers who felt that their line manager, Pamela, was
12 behaving in ways which were not compatible with feminist principles.
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22 **Expectations of Pamela (YF): Changing Priorities and a Breakdown of Trust**

23
24 Pamela, a senior manager, positioned herself as feminist. However, two feminist middle managers
25 in her team described what they saw as changes in Pamela's management practice. This, they felt,
26 had become increasingly didactic and less person friendly over time. At interview, Kate who was
27 newly appointed to a middle management position said:
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34 She has changed out of all recognition. Once I would have trusted her implicitly. I could
35 always rely on her to listen if I had any problems and she would do what she could to help.
36
37 That's all changed. She can be very two faced; nice as pie to your face, but then you find out
38 she has said something derogatory about the way that you are carrying out your job. It all
39 seems to be about how the Department is performing in the eyes of the great and the good.
40
41 She calls herself a feminist and I thought that meant something about how she would treat
42 people. Treating people with respect, I suppose. I don't feel I can trust her anymore.
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53 Caroline, another member of Pamela's team, also reported disquiet at what she felt to be a change
54 in Pamela's management style. Caroline is an experienced middle manager who had been working
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1 on a part-time contract in Pamela's Department, which, much to Caroline's distress, Pamela refused
2 to renew.
3
4

5
6 At interview Caroline reported feeling very damaged by what she felt to be a real dissonance
7 between Pamela's rhetoric of empowering and supporting other women, and a reality, which she felt
8 to be harsh and unsupportive. Caroline said:
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14
15 It's like dealing with Dr Jeckyll and Ms Hyde. She has always been so positive about my
16 contribution to the Department and now she seems to have completely changed tack. It
17 leaves a nasty taste in your mouth. I certainly don't trust her anymore. All she seems worried
18 about is how much I cost her and the fact that she cannot afford me. She seems totally
19 oblivious to the fact that I may be out of a job.
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29 Caroline understood that, in a climate of reduced funding, it may have been Pamela's reluctance to
30 increase her Department's wages bill that had caused her change in attitude. However, she had
31 made '... an assumption of sisterhood and solidarity behaviour [that] contends that women will
32 support and align themselves with other women' (Mavin, 2006:266). The fact that Pamela did not
33 fulfil her expectations caused a permanent erosion of trust on Caroline's behalf (Power, 1994).
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41 The final narrative turns its attention to a feminist manager who holds a senior role in the academy.
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45 **Diana (YF)... the Individualized Feminist?**

46
47 Of all the women discussed in this paper, Diana is the most senior, albeit the youngest, of the
48 women in the sample group. She is also the most overtly feminist of the group in that she openly
49 demonstrates her feminist principles, sets up women's groups, and supports gender equality
50 initiatives. How Diana defines her feminism is unclear, but what is clear is that she is an advocate of
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1 women attaining senior management roles. However, with regards to supporting other women,
2 something which might be seen by some as a feminist principle (Mauthner and Edwards, 2010)
3
4 Diana, when asked for her support by a more junior colleague, refused this request. Diana was
5
6 approached by Brenda who was seeking advice regarding problems that she was having with her
7
8 line manager. However, Brenda reported that she did not get the sympathetic response for which
9
10 she was hoping. Brenda said:
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14
15 I was quite shocked, she was quite cold and she spent most of her time talking about her
16
17 own position and worrying how supporting me might affect her. She passed everything back
18
19 to me and virtually told me to sort the problem out myself. That taught me a lesson; I won't
20
21 make that mistake again. I think in her book being a feminist means looking after yourself on
22
23 the way to the top.
24
25

26
27 There are of course two sides to every story and we do not hear this tale from Diana's perspective.
28
29 It is however telling, that when supporting another woman could have potentially caused a problem
30
31 for her, Diana declined to become involved.
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36 **Discussion and Conclusion**

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38
39 This paper has explored some of the challenges faced by seven feminist managers who carry out
40
41 their management and leadership roles in the contemporary academy. Even within this small
42
43 sample group, a number of shifts in the ways that these women carry out their roles are visible.
44
45 There is no wish to take an essentialist position which argues that 'Vintage Feminists,' who began
46
47 their management roles prior to the incursions of neo-liberalism, represent the universal good, and
48
49 'Younger Feminists' who have been promoted to management positions when neo-liberalism was
50
51 more firmly established, represent the universal bad. It is important to acknowledge that feminist
52
53 managers and leaders are likely to encompass a variety of approaches to the ways in which they
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1 carry out their roles. However, even when bearing this in mind, analysis of the data reveals a shift
 2 in feminist management practices over time away from person - centred discourses, to a style which
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Table 2. Analysis of results

Name (pseudonym)	Type of Institution and pseudonym	Age ('vintage' or 'young')	Dominant feminist theoretical position/s	Management style	Posture	Coping strategy
Academic/ non academic		Management position/level				
University Dept						
Rosalyn academic education	post 1992 Fallowfield University	vintage senior	2nd wave feminism	collaborative political	extreme internal conflict. Cash of values	left education
Cynthia academic education	post 1992 St Bedes University	vintage middle	2nd and 3rd wave feminism	collaborative political	conflicted damaged anger	struggling with reinvention.
Caroline academic social studies	post 1992 St Bedes University	vintage middle	2nd wave feminism	collaborative	disillusioned lack of trust	struggling with reinvention
Brenda academic	post 1992 Riverside University	vintage middle	2nd wave feminism	collaborative	disillusioned expectations not realized, lack of trust	struggling with reinvention
	post 1992 St Bedes University	young senior		collaborative to neo liberal person cantered to self centred	survival	reinvention/ compliance
Kate Academic social studies	post 1992 St Bede's University	young middle	3rd wave feminism	collaborative	Pamela academic social studies	struggling with reinvention reinvention

Diana Academic university wide	post 1992 Riverside University	young senior	neo liberal	Individualistic Institution centred	thriving	accepting/ embracing
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Cynthia and Rosalyn, Vintage Feminists, were unable to reconcile some of the demands made of them as leaders and managers in new hard times. This they blamed on a clash with their political principles and the fact that some of the measures that they now had to employ flew in the face of their management and political philosophy, central to which was the employment of discourses of collegiality and equity.

Pamela, a Younger Feminist, had begun her management career later than Rosalyn and Cynthia at a time when neo-liberalism was more established within the education marketplace. Pamela saw herself as endorsing the discourses of social justice, care for others and collegiality. However, from the standpoints of middle managers Kate and Caroline, there was a perception that the way in which Pamela was carrying out her management role had changed. Pamela's former supportive style was no longer evident in that she no longer seemed to exhibit any degree of solidarity with her subordinate female colleagues. Pamela seemed to prioritize the economic efficiencies necessary to run her Department rather than to supporting colleagues who were seeking her help.

Diana, the youngest, but most senior, of the managers exhibited the most pronounced individualized and self-interested approach to her role. Diana had become a manager at a time when the dictates of new managerialism such as 'economy, efficiency and effectiveness' and a need for 'ruthless individualization', had become embedded within the workplace discourse. As the fight for individual and institutional survival became more acute, it is possible that the dominant discourses of neo liberalism would have influenced her brand of feminism (Thompson, 2015). It is apparent that, over time, some feminist managers appear to have become less collaborative and

1
2 more individualistic in the ways in which they approach their management task in the neo-liberal
3
4 academy.
5

6
7 Of the seven women managers and leaders in the sample, only two came from an institution that
8
9 engaged in Athena SWAN initiatives. Clearly it is not possible to draw conclusions from data related
10
11 to two women. It is however interesting to note that the senior woman who had been involved in
12
13 Athena SWAN was possibly the most prominent in promoting women's career opportunities within
14
15 existing cultures. She was less inclined to challenge those cultures on behalf of others. On its own
16
17 this means little but does hint at Finlayson's (2015) concerns that such 'liberations' tend to focus on
18
19 the prospects of individuals rather than challenging existing institutional structures. This should be a
20
21 subject for future study.
22
23

24
25 It is also clear, from analysis of the data, that there remain expectations related to how feminist
26
27 managers 'should' behave in terms of exercising solidarity to their female colleagues. The fact that
28
29 Brenda, Kate and Caroline, lower ranking feminist managers, all reported that they had expectations
30
31 of their senior feminist managers, supports this view.
32
33

34
35 There is no wish to add to negative discourses related to women as managers and leaders. As
36
37 Mavin, Grandy and Williams (2014: 439) point out, 'relationships between women in organizations
38
39 are complex, contradictory and under-researched'. However, the narratives discussed in this paper,
40
41 albeit taken from a very small sample, point to the fact that, as neo liberal practices 'bite', even
42
43 feminist managers are forced to adopt harsher styles than formerly. Some feminist women
44
45 accommodate this change more readily than others. Mavin (2006:265) points out that:
46
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49
50 Solidarity behaviour is complex in that it assumes that women view other women as their
51
52 natural allies, regardless of hierarchical differences... However, solidarity behaviour may set
53
54 expectations of senior women in management, which cannot be fulfilled.
55
56

1
2 Fitzgerald (2014:114) also argues that such expectations are unrealistic. As she says:
3
4

5 Women should [not] be expected to speak on behalf of women and their collective concerns
6
7 (Ledwith and Manfredi, 2000) ... Precisely because women at senior levels continue to face
8
9 the challenges of gendered expectations, this is an institutional problem that remains
10
11 significantly unresolved.
12
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14
15 It is also important to note the warning given by Broadbridge and Kerfoot (2010: 280) who point out
16
17 that:
18

19
20 ...it also places the onus on [feminist] women themselves to change the structures of
21
22 organisations at a time when women, as well as men, find their workplace and work
23
24 experiences increasingly anxiety provoking...
25
26

27 Mauthner and Edwards (2010: 499) argue that, realistically, attempts at feminist management have
28
29 to be seen in the context of the organizational structures within which they exist. As they put it:
30
31

32 This may mean that feminists have to adopt more realistic and less idealistic practices that
33
34 take more fully into account the professional and personal inequalities that exist between
35
36 colleagues and the fact that we have individual, collective and institutional professional and
37
38 intellectual identities, ambitions and obligations.
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42 The argument that actively endorsing the discourses of social justice and feminism brings particular
43
44 expectations is a compelling one and endorses the view of Mauthner and Edwards (ibid: 499.) that
45
46 feminist managers should work with differences and inequalities, 'in reflexive, ethical and caring
47
48 ways'. Although it is necessary for feminist managers to have a realistic approach to their roles, it is
49
50 also important that managers and leaders who acknowledge themselves as feminist should strive to
51
52 operate a discourse of ethics and care in an increasingly harsh workplace environment.
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1 The role of initiatives such as Athena SWAN in promoting an ethic of care and promoting a
2 challenge to institutional structures is worthy of further research.
3

4
5
6 Women managers, especially feminist women managers, walk a tightrope between institutional
7 expectations, the gendered expectations of others, and in some cases, the expectations that they
8 hold of themselves. In an educational climate, which is increasingly perilous, how feminist managers
9 attempt to survive in their roles and whether, in an attempt to do so, they have modified their
10 enactment of feminist principles and practice, should be an increasing focus for study.
11
12

13 Like (Ball, 1999:1), ... 'I do not speak from a finished position... What I say ought to be taken as
14 "propositions", "game openings" (Foucault, 1991: pp.90-91).
15
16

17 This is an exploratory piece of work which invites further research.
18

19 Notes

20
21 1. Ofsted: Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. They inspect and regulate
22 services that care for children and young people, and services providing education and skills for learners of all ages.
23

24 2. QAA: This is the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. It safeguards standards and the quality of UK
25 higher education wherever it is delivered.
26

27 3. In UK institutions fields of study are often known as routes or programmes. These are led by route or programme
28 leaders who tend to be middle managers.
29

30 4. Post-1992 universities are those institutions that were often former polytechnics, institutions of higher education or
31 university colleges. They achieved university status following the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. These new
32 universities may have a slightly different offer than the pre-1992 universities for example, some were former teacher
33 training colleges.
34

35 5. CPD: Continuing Professional Development Plans: CPD is the holistic commitment of professionals towards the
36 enhancement of personal skills and proficiency throughout their careers.
37
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39 6. School: Development Plan: School development planning is a strategic plan for improvement. The School
40 Development Plan (SDP) is usually created by the Governing Body and the Senior Leadership Team.
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Shifting Feminisms: Collaborative or Individualized Managers?

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