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Preface

BLIS Research started in 2002 when the BLIS Research Group was formed. In 2003 the BLIS Research Group started organising annual e4sme research conferences from which the best papers were identified to be reviewed by the BLIS Journal editorial panel.

BLIS Journal is peer-reviewed and published annually (once yearly), is committed to publishing scholarly empirical and theoretical research articles that have a high impact on the management field. BLIS Journal covers domains such as business strategy and policy, entrepreneurship, human resource management, organisational behaviour, organisational theory, and research methods.

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BLIS Editorial Team

Foreword

2020 Changes in global normality

Global discussions about what life will be like when we emerge from the coronavirus pandemic have already started. Many businesses leaders are wondering whether the crisis offers the opportunity to set the world on a more sustainable and equal path. Will the Covid-19 recovery offer an opportunity to create a different type of 'normal' – one that can help restore trust in governments and endorse crucial economic and social rights. The crisis is set to create a huge business loss worldwide, which should technically mean a global recession with everyone affected and with a devastating impact on the poorest countries. Governments are already creating plans for recovery, with a focus on the financial stimulus needed to help the recovery of their economy.

But what is needed is a systemic change that goes far beyond individual governments and financial instruments to recalibrate societal values and provide a more sustainable underpinning for the future. Major crises is normally a great opportunity for change: from business contexts this situation should not be seen as a temporary breakdown, but rather as processes of change, creating new frameworks of business representation and regulation.

The economic devastation Covid-19 is wreaking across the world must be seen in the wider context of the enduring effects of the 2008 financial crisis. Businesses should be thinking "Why return to NORMAL when we can recover to a better stronger winning position". Instead of going back to the past, winners and successful businesses drive forward towards a new and different future, a future for which they quickly become purpose-built. What does it take to recover by looking forward and emerging from a crisis significantly stronger than ever?

Successful businesses tend to take a comprehensive and integrated approach that spans six distinct areas, starting with scenario planning, progressing through a number of strategic, operational models and cost choices, in addition culminating with new organisational capabilities and a clear vision of how to mobilise for success. For example, rethinking customer needs, and how to meet them. Customer and consumer expectations and demands are undoubtedly changing, prompting those companies that are quick to respond the start adapting their operating models. For instance, in response to Covid-19, many B2C companies have quickly added delivery options and enhanced their emphasis on safety, health and cleanliness. Furthermore, despite the difficulty of predicting how customer behaviours and preferences will evolve over time, the crisis has made one thing undeniably clear: the future is digital.

Stanley Oliver

Professor Dr Stanley Oliver
Editor November 2020

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Title:

Toxic leadership in Education: mirroring the real world?

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Abstract:

The aims of this paper were to investigate whether teachers recognised toxic leadership in their work context and what they saw as it root causes.

The author used a questionnaire as a pilot in order to generate salient issues.

This pilot questionnaire was followed by research conversations between the research and 73 teachers based on a Habermasian social constructionist practice.

The results suggest that there are some similarities between education and other employment sectors and that 'Toxic Leadership' is an issue that should be addressed.

This paper calls for further research on toxicity in educational leadership and a move to ethical forms of leadership.

Keywords:

Toxic Leadership; Sixth Form College; Habermas; social constructionism; trust and professionalism; ethical culture; Dark Personality.

Introduction:

Boddy et al. (2015: 530), reported on the 'a rise of psychopathic managers as toxic and bullying leaders within organisations [as an issue] in western capitalist societies'. Although toxic leadership is seen an increasingly prominent theme in contemporary Organisational Theory, it remains an under-researched area in the discourse relating to educational leadership in England, and in particular the Sixth Form College sector. Einarsen et al. (2007) argue that 'little research and theory development has addressed destructive leadership behaviours and the potential negative effects of such behaviours'. This paper aims to explore teachers' perceptions of leadership toxicity, focusing particularly on the concept of 'dark personality', as well as its possible causes.

Introduction to the issue- a perceived phenomenon of organisational life:

In an extensive study of business practices in the UK two leading professional bodies, The Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) and Business in the Community (BITC) sought to 'ask business leaders and managers about their own values, the values of the organisations they work for and any ethical dilemmas they have faced in the workplace (May and Pardey, 2013). The research methodology incorporated a range of methods such as telephone calling, multiple choice and open-ended questionnaires involving 1174 managers from both the public and private sector. The results were stark: '63% of the managers we surveyed say that they have been asked to do something contrary to their own ethical code at some point in their career, while 43% of managers have been told to behave in direct violation of their organisation's own values statements, and 9% had been asked to break the law' (May and Pardey, 2013: 2). Moreover, although 83% of participants reported that their organisation had a published statement of values, 53% of managers rated their own ethical standards as being higher than that of their organisation, and 28% felt worried about reporting malpractice (May and Pardey, 2012: 2). Clearly, there are issues relating to the validity and adherence of values statements in such organisations. Importantly, as (May and Pardey, 2013: 2) recognise 'this management disconnect between the top and the bottom of an organisation reflects how difficult it is to engage lower level managers with values, and also how hard it is for managers to translate their organisation's values across their teams'. This report highlights the centrality of cultural values to the discourse on leadership effectiveness and the ethical workplace, as well as the role of leadership in inculcating ethical standards of behaviour.

Introduction to the concept:

In addition to being studied as a concept by organisation theorists (Einarsen et al, 2007; Walton, 2007), toxic leadership has been researched in a variety of occupational contexts such as: British and American corporate business (Lipman-Blumen, 2005a, 2005b), nursing (Speedy, 2005; Murray, 2010) and the United States' (US) military (Williams, 2005; Reed, 2008), as well as in education (Mahlangu, 2014). Over the last decade or so, interest in dysfunctional leadership behaviours have grown as researchers have chosen to reflect on catastrophic failures in corporate management ranging from Enron Corporation in the United States during 2001, the Stafford Hospital scandal after 2007 - in which 400 patients died because of poor management and a lack of accountability- and the Credit Crunch post 2008. At the heart of much of the research has been

the observation that 'we may do well to consider workplace dysfunction and toxicity as normal- rather than as abnormal- phenomena of modern organisational life' (Walton, 2007: 19).

According to Lipman-Blumen (2005b) toxic leadership can be discerned in:

Those individuals who, by virtue of their destructive behaviours and their dysfunctional personal qualities or characteristics, inflict serious and enduring harm on the individuals, groups, organisations, communities and even the nations that they lead. Reflecting on toxic leadership in the US army, Reed (2008:67) offered three defining characteristics of toxic leadership: an apparent lack of concern for subordinates, inadequate skills in developing effective inter-personal relations and a perception of the leader as self-interested. According to Travanti (2011:129-131), 'in general, toxic leaders are characterised by fighting and controlling rather than uplifting and inspiring. They like to success by tearing others down'.

The concept of toxic leadership is closely tied to a particular personality type of 'dark personality'. Importantly, however, Schyns (2015: 4) makes a useful point in the discussion on toxicity in organisational life: Toxic leaders and toxic leadership are not the same: toxic leaders are those with dark personality traits, but in order for toxic leadership to thrive, other conditions need to be met as well'. So, although the issue of dark personality will inevitably be at the forefront of the discussion, the environmental conditions and organisational cultures that tolerate dark personality must also be explored. Dark personality traits were defined by Paulhus and Williams (2002) as narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy, and according to Schyns (2015: 2) these 'traits are distinct, yet overlap, and are characterised by indifference and dominance'.

According to Boddy et al, (2013: 533), research is arguably moving towards a consensus that narcissism is the 'lightest' of the triad and that while Machiavellianism and psychopathy are very similar, psychopaths are the 'darkest' of the three personalities'. The table below summarises some of the key themes relating to dark personality that have been identified in the literature.

Term	**Research**	**Features**
Narcissism	Raskin and Terry, 1988 Babiak and Hare, 2006 Godkin and Allcorn, 2011 Stein, 2013	Self-centred perspective Exploitative and destructive
Machiavellianism	Paulhaus and Williams, 2002 Jones and Paulhaus, 2008	Without conscience, selfish and instrumental in dealing with others
Psychopathy	Smith and Lilienfeld, 2013 Boddy, 2013	Superficial charm, a risk taker, and a lack of guilt for failure Capacity for self-presentation; lying and manipulation of others

Table 1. An overview of research on dark personality.

Importantly, Schyns (2015: 10) considers that 'some dark personality traits are conducive to performance... however, we need to keep in mind that there is a difference between dark personality leading to dark behaviour and the strategic use of dark behaviour to achieve goals'. Certainly, some traits of dark behaviour such as an excessive attention to perfectionism can be used to achieve higher standards at work, but herein is a fundamental issue. How far should organisations tolerate manifestations of dark personality?

Travanti (2011: 131) offers three typical managerial approaches that share similarities with dark personality, described as: the toxic micromanager, the toxic narcissist and the toxic bully. The toxic micromanager is typified by an excessive control over sub-ordinates and, in so doing, displays a lack of trust in their colleagues. The toxic narcissist, on the other hand, is more concerned with their own performance and ego, whilst the toxic bully manages other through fear. It is clear that the term 'toxicity' can be applied to a range of behaviours. For Schmidt (2008) it is possible to arrange these behaviours into a spectrum of leadership that includes abusive supervision, authoritarian leadership, narcissism, self-promotion, and unpredictability. Although it may be possible to identify a mode of behaviour as toxic, the issue of how to isolate the individual's behaviour patterns outside that of the organisation and its culture is more problematic. As Tavanti (2011: 134) acknowledges, 'toxic leaders usually thrive in toxic organisations'. For Cheang and Appelbaum (2013: 165), 'organisations must therefore adapt its practices to both identify and manage employees who present with, or have tendencies towards, corporate pyschopathy'.

Ardichvili et al. (2010: 256), recognise that unethical behaviour is a function of individual and contextual factors that relate to the concept of organisational culture. Moreover, it is clear that different occupational cultures exist between the military, the health and education systems and the world of corporate business, with their own professional code of ethics and values systems in place. Despite this qualification, all organisations possess an institutional culture that is the product of the external climate, the professional context, as well as the outcomes of social interaction between employees. Organisational culture, then, may be defined as the sum of basic assumptions, expectations, values and behavioural norms that are shared between members on an on-going basis. Organisational cultures could be sub-divided into formalised corporate features and the more informal or social behaviours. Whereas corporate features could be recognised in organisational hierarchies, policy documentation and the clear demarcation of work roles, social behaviours relate to norms, rituals and language. Importantly, as Trevino (1994) recognises, 'Organisations possessing ethical cultures create and maintain a shared pattern of values, customs, practices, and expectations which dominate normative behaviour in the organisation'. In sum, we should not aim to isolate the concept of toxic leadership from the prevailing cultural norms within an organisation, and indeed from the wider environmental climate within which organisations exist.

The toxic triangle:

For Walton (2007: 25) 'a combination of toxic leaders, vulnerable and demeaned followers, and conducive contexts results in an unhealthy 'toxic triangle' threatening the health and vitality of those within its bounds'. Although the idea of the toxic triangle is clearly tied to the concept

of destructive leadership, the real value of this model is to be found in its reference to followership. Importantly, as Padilla et al. (2007:182) recognise, 'followers have been studied less often than leaders, yet their role in the leadership process is obviously pivotal '. Contemporary relational theory (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995) acknowledges the importance of followership to leadership and aims to explore and understand the inherent power-relations within such relationships. Given the hierarchical nature of organisational life and the asynchronous distribution of power therein, the existence of vulnerable or susceptible followers should not be a surprise. For Padilla et al. (2007:183) this social relationship led to the creation of two types of follower: the conformer and the colluder. As Padilla et al (2007:183) describe, 'both types are motivated by self-interest, but their concerns are different: conformers try to minimise the consequences of not going along while colluders seek personal gain through association with a destructive leader'. This attempt at describing the strategic positioning of workers is reflecting elsewhere in the literature in relation to the education system.

The institutional context: what are Sixth Form Colleges, and what role do they perform? The institutional context and increasingly marketised environment within with Sixth Form Colleges exist are important conditioning factors in the definition of work roles and responsibilities and therefore impact on the debate over toxicity in leadership. The post-compulsory sector in England is a diverse collection of different institutional types: ranging from the large General Further Education Colleges (GFECs), Sixth Form Colleges (SFCs), to agricultural colleges and residential colleges for disabled people and for those with leaning difficulties. By far the largest provider of post-16 education and training both in terms of size and number are GFECs; these colleges are principally concerned with the delivery of vocational programmes, skills training and adult education provision in its broadest sense, and can cater for tens of thousands of students across several sites. The second major type of college is the SFC, which is principally concerned with preparing their students for university entrance. There are currently 93 SFCs in England compared to 222 GFECs, SFC are smaller with around 1,200 - 2,500 students and offer a much narrower curriculum centred around GCE Advanced and other Level 3 courses. Although GFECs and SFCs now exist as legally separate sectors, they do compete with schools in many areas for the 16-19 GCE A Level market that prepares students for university entrance.

Since the enactment of the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act (ASCL) in 2010, SFCs have been relocated into a separate sector to reflect their distinct mission and professional identity. Historically, teachers in SFCs have viewed themselves as possessing a distinctive professional status in relation to their line managers. Lumby (2002, 2003) suggests that SFCs have developed along a different evolutionary path compared to other educational institutions, such as the GFECs, and have maintained a professionally-based, learner-centred culture that echoes their origins in the school sector. This cultural context has important implications for how teachers relate to their work and professional status, with those in the SFC sector viewing managers as one half in a professional partnership of colleagues.

The third element within the 'toxic triangle' is that of the conducive environment. The period since the early 1990s has witnessed a major change in the nature of teachers' work and their

professional status. This transformation of teacher professionalism has been engineered through the imposition of new expectations by Central Government. An audit culture has been imposed on the profession through the systems associated with New Public Management (NPM) that enables toxic line managers to display 'dark' behaviours. Professionalism has been redefined by Government, as has been recognised for some years (Bottery 1996; Beck 1999; Ball 2003), and reworked into the concept of 'professionality' (Gunter 2002, 146) and 'performativity' (Ball, 2003). Teachers are increasingly required to adhere to the rules imposed by line managers: being professional is increasingly becoming defined in terms of conformity and subordination and measured through data analysis of students' results, lesson observations and compliance to the practice of New Public Management. It also infers acceptance of a new type of 'assertive' managerialism that challenges the collaborative approach of the past.

Professionalism cannot be dissociated from the self and the ethical framework within which it is constructed. In recent years, the ethical treatment of workers has come to the fore as senior leaders in the private and public sectors seek to demonstrate their 'corporate social responsibility' and limit instances of dark personality amongst middle management. Take, for example, the idea of developing 'emotional intelligence' and the promotion of 'well-being' health programmes, which were identified as areas for management training in some sixth form colleges. Such approaches may be cited as being positive steps to tackle toxicity within educational organisations. However, Cheang and Appelbaum (2013: 166) highlight the ever-present responsibilities of organisational leaders in inculcating an appropriate managerial culture and addressing instances of deviant behaviours. Whether this approach is effective remains open to debate. Critical theory approaches to ethics at work reject the idea of an abstract corporate responsibility and emphasise the need to establish ethical practice at both individual level and that of wider society (Wray-Bliss 2011). In contrast to mainstream technical-rationalism and the idea of the uniform worker, critical theory asserts that there are many dimensions to the 'self at work', as well as positioned identities. For critical theorists, management control is exercised in both this process of identity formation to re-engineer human behaviour, professional identity and self-worth (Thomas, 2011). Such a process of indoctrination is inherently complex and may involve individual complicity as well as some resistance, but it is nevertheless powerful and fundamentally unethical. For those managers with a disposition towards toxic behaviours, an environment that is based on legitimated control offers opportunities for micro-management, narcissistic behaviour, or even bullying.

Leadership as a relational construct: asymmetrical power, professional identity and trust

For Peters and Waterman (1982: 245), the real role of leadership is to manage the values of an organisation. The research undertaken by May and Pardey (2013) highlighted the importance of embedding a values-based outlook within the organisational culture at all levels. As Gini (2010: 346) recognised, ethical behaviour is essentially a form of 'reflective conduct'- we often mould our behaviour to that of our environment. The absence of a values-based organisational culture is a major factor in the emergence of toxicity. Although Rawls (1985) argued that ethics is fundamental to collective life and serves as the basis of justice and equity, Fox (1994) questions its universality. In both Fox (1994), in his analysis of American business, and Ball's view of English education (2003:211), modern professionals display a form of 'values schizophrenia',

that according to Freeman (1992) is the result of 'the problem of two realms': the business and ethical world clashing. This dualism mirrors the thoughts of Habermas and the distinction between the domesticity of the 'life world' and the 'system world' (Habermas, 1989) The term 'system' is used to describe the formalised mechanisms of social control that exist, such as the civil service and agencies of the modern capitalist state. Importantly, for Habermas, although the 'life world' may be inherently conservative, in that it is involved in cultural reproduction, it is characterised by relatively high levels of individual freedom and collective co-operation. In contrast, the 'system' is typified by control and oppression. Habermas (1989) argues that the modern state has created a dysfunctional system in which individuals are denuded of their individual autonomy, with their ethical framework re-engineered in order to meet the needs of late capitalism. For Habermas (1989) this process corresponds to a form of 'demoralisation' in which civic and personal ethics are distorted. In order to counter this 'demoralisation' of society and the amoral organisational management, Habermas (1989) calls for a fundamental review of how we interact with others. For Habermas' (1989) thesis to be validated by the research, the data would need to highlight a deterministic role for NPM in engineering certain dark behaviours.

The interaction between professionals at work is predicated on the presumption and practise of trust. Importantly, for Mahlangu (2014:313), 'toxic leadership destroys a basic human sense of trust that is critical for working relationships, and effective leadership in schools'. For Brian (1998: 404) 'trust is assumed necessarily as the basis of a personal membership of the professional community and it is a norm that guides professional life'. Importantly, we should acknowledge that trust at work is evident in asymmetrical relationships that are governed by hierarchical line management systems. Moreover, for Brian (1998: 398) this form of relationship is also psychological in nature with the subordinate accepting a legitimated form of personal vulnerability to another. In general, professionals accept line management because it promises organisational efficiency and clear lines of authority, and implicitly this situated form of vulnerability. Research has suggested that institutional-wide trust in leaders is an important factor in raising students' achievements (Wahlstrom and Seashore Louis, 2008:482) and in leading innovation (Ellonen et al. 2008: 165). Trust, it seems, is not only a feature of professionalism but a pre-condition for improving organisational performance.

There are, however, potential dangers associated with asymmetrical power relations based on trust. Trust operates in subtle and complex ways. Not only can trust exist in powerful affective and cognitive forms (Young and Mossholder, 2010: 50), but in two further dimensions: the impersonal and personal. Whereas we can recognise the impersonal dimension to trust is predicated on formalised work-based systems, personal trust is founded in the psychological construct fashioned by individuals at work. It is within this second dimension- the personal- that space exists for toxic behaviours to develop. In recent years, Governments across the globe have pressed for the practise of transformational models of leadership as a means of moving institutions to higher levels of performance (Leithwood and Jantzi, 1991; Leithwood, 1992; Leithwood, 1994). Implicit within such models is the alignment and psychological conditioning of teachers according to the vision enunciated by a charismatic leader. Although servant and authentic models of educational leadership (Stoten, 2013; Stoten, 2014) offer an alternative to

the technical-rationalist theory that is based on moral authority, there are potential dangers tied to charismatic leadership. Tourish (2013) has highlighted the potential dangers associated with inauthentic forms of transformational leadership where dysfunctional charisma and organisational culture combine to create cult-like behaviours. Furthermore, for Tourish (2013) not only is the concept of transformational leadership flawed, it may also serve to legitimise the over-concentration of organisational power in a select few.

Research methodology:

The position of the researcher was complicated by the fact that the author undertook the research for this paper whilst serving as a 'teacher-manager' in the SFC sector. Although this enabled convenience sampling to take place, it necessitated the recognition of the peculiarities of undertaking practitioner-based research with close colleagues. In particular, the ethical dimension to this form of research required that assurances were provided that respected participant anonymity and protection. For the researcher who adopts a Habermasian methodology, the research tools used are conditioned by the particular philosophical and ethical stance taken by the researcher. Kincheloe and McLaren (2003) describe how that research should have some 'catalytic validity' in that it is used to inform the improvement of the social world. In contrast to positivist research methodology, a Habermasian researcher rejects the objectivist view of knowledge and values-free research. For Habermas (1984/1987), all knowledge is the product of social construction and is therefore open to competing 'validity claims', which reflect differing positions in contemporary society. Burr (2003: 159) describes alternative claims such as usefulness, fruitfulness and soundness to those such as reliability, validity and transferability that are recommended by positivist researchers. Habermas (1984/1987) advocated a correspondence theory of knowledge formation and truth in which dominant ideas permeate society and distort its values. In response to this epistemological hegemony, Habermas (1984/1987) called for an inter-subjective dialogue between participants eased on equity. In so doing, the research should, it was anticipated, produce richer, in-depth insights into perspectives on work and toxic behaviours.

The research was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved a preliminary 'pilot' questionnaire that was sub-divided into four sections that was distributed to 20 teachers at a single institution. Section one contained a number of 10 statements that elicited a response from the participant using a Likert scale from 1-5. This series of 10 statements related to typical behaviours of toxic leaders, such as: 'X tended to display little concern for the well-being of others', 'X tended to leave others after a meeting feeling worse off', and X tended to control others through fear'. This series of 10 statements was then followed by section 2 where there was an opportunity for participants to make open-response comments. Section three offered 7 statements that called for a 'yes', 'no' or 'no response' answer- such as 'Have you ever been asked by a line manager to go against your own personal values? As well as 'How confident would you feel in reporting an ethical breach at work?'. These statements were drawn from the research undertaken by May and Pardey (2013) and sought to correlate the responses from two sectors to identify areas of commonality or difference. The fourth section offered participants the opportunity to express their views on whether they felt organisational leaders behaved ethically.

The second stage to the research involved an additional 53 discussions based on Habermas' (1984/1987) ideas of the 'ideal speech situation', as described above. The purpose of the 'research conversation' was to elicit much more developed thoughts from teachers with neither researcher nor participant dominating or leading the conversation. Often with such conversations, new and intriguing avenues open-up for exploration, although for a minority, these discussions led to a dead-end where it became evident that the root of a problem has been little more than a personality clash. The key to understanding the meaning of these research conversations is to identify key issues through effective coding of responses. Themes that emerged repeatedly and were of some importance were coded and clustered together into more manageable areas for analysis. This approach drew upon the methodological approach of Miles and Huberman (1994:17), in which they recommend an iterative approach that started with 'some orienting ideas' that could be categorised into thematic 'bins' . This process of sifting codes led to 'three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing' Miles and Huberman (1994:10).

There are limitations to this form of practitioner-based research exercise. In particular, the sample size was relatively small, with 73 teachers surveyed from only four SFCs. The sample size also tended to include a disproportionately larger proportion of main scale teachers and middle managers than senior leaders. In this sense, the sample had been limiting in terms of drawing conclusions. Although the findings are not transferable to the education system as a whole, the research did highlight a significant level of discontent within the SFC sector and unease with aspects of the approach taken by senior management. The main outcome of this paper is to highlight the existence of toxicity in the SFC sector and to serve as a 'catalytic agent' for change.

Findings:

There were a number of important findings that emerged from the research. In terms of section 1 and its 10 statements, the results generated are presented as an average on the Likert scale 1- 5, with 1 being very often and 5 very rarely:

1.	X tended to display little concern for the well-being for others	2.1
2.	X tended to micro-manage rather than empower sub-ordinates	2.0
3.	X tended to be motivated by self-interest	2.0
4.	X tended to generate a negative climate	1.6
5.	X tended to leave others after a meeting feeling worse off	1.6
6.	X tended to undermine others' dignity	1.9
7.	X tended to spin news to serve their own interests	1.8
8.	X was regarded as highly competent in achieving desired outcomes	2.0
9.	X tended to be driven by their own ego rather than objective plans	2.2
10.	X tended to control others through fear	1.7

Table 1. The data generated from section 1 in the questionnaire

This data suggests that statement 9 and 1 were the least well recognised as leadership behaviours, closely followed by statements 2, 3 and 8. The most common form of leader behaviours were described in statements 4 and 5, followed closely by statement 10. All three statements 4, 5 and 10 infer that toxic behaviours have a significant affective impact on teachers.

The feedback from section two provided some insights into the real-life experiences of teachers:
N, a middle-aged female English and Philosophy teacher with 18 years experience:
'In a departmental meetings this manager used to use people's full names rather than the names they preferred- so Vicky was Victoria and Dave was David. This tiny detail made the staff feel powerless and belittled but it was impossible to complain without seeming petty and foolish, subtle stuff!'

P, a lately-retired male Mathematics teacher with 30 years experience:
[When reflecting on the cause of toxicity] 'I would say that the personality of the 'toxic leader' is probably the most likely cause, but perhaps the pressures acting on the system bring out this type of leadership!'

J, a very experienced male teacher of History with 35 years experience:
[Reporting on the behaviour of a toxic leader] 'Naming and shaming subjects at staff meeting' [and its cause] 'Pressures are a factor, but personality is important. There is always a choice...'

S, a female Archaeology teacher with 21 years of experience:
[Described her experience of toxic leaders as:] Aggressive verbal instructions issued with no witness; unrealistic demands- just do it rather than support and guidance; constant stream of negatives emails to staff.

J, a male Geography teacher with 29 years of teaching experience:
'Toxic leadership is where senior management create an environment of fear through which others are blamed for their failings. An environment in which little or no support is given to members of staff... I think poor management skills, large egos and protecting themselves are the main issues concerning toxic leadership which is partly caused by the education system.... I don't feel the education system can be blamed as an entirety though it is a factor. I believe it is individuals, who are either incompetent or have no basic man management skills, who are the key.'

A, a male Politics teacher with 19 years experience:
'They overloaded me- I was exhausted by the combination of management jobs and my teaching- it almost drove me to a breakdown'.

These comments are typical of the responses that were generated by section two of the questionnaire. Importantly, although the importance of the education system as a causal factor is recognised by many, it is the personal qualities of line managers and their inter-personal skills that emerge as central to the discussion on toxic leadership.

Section three aimed to establish any correlation between the findings from the education system and that generated by May and Pardey (2013) in the commercial world. The statements generated the following data:

1. Have you ever been asked [by a line manager] to go against your own personal values? Education: Yes [80%] No [10%] No answer [10%] Business: Yes [63%]
2. Have you ever been asked [by a line manager] to go against the organisation's values? Education: Yes [30%] No [50%] No answer [20%] Business: Yes [43%]
3. Is there a statement of organisational values at your workplace? Education: Yes [70%] No [10%] No answer [20%] Business: Yes [83%]
4. Were you involved in drafting the values of your organisation? Education: Yes [10%] No [90%] No answer [0%] Business: Yes [50%]
5. In general, do your colleagues follow the organisation's values? Education: Yes [50%] No [20%] No answer [30%] Business: Yes [84%] (management level)
6. How confident would you feel in reporting an ethical breach at work? Education: Yes [20%] No [50%] No answer [30%] Business: Yes [44%]
7. Do you feel any conflict between your organisation's values and your own? Education: Yes [80%] No [20%] No answer [1%] Business: Yes [58%] No [41%]

Table 2. Data generated from section 3 of the questionnaire.

Discussion:

Interestingly, it would seem from statements 1 and 2 in section 3 of the questionnaire that there is some basis in considering that there is a 'crisis of ethics' in the workplace. In education, it appears that this crisis of ethics is more pronounced than in business with a significant majority reporting an ethical dilemma in statement 1. Indeed, it is clear that a majority of respondents in both the education and business sectors have experienced some form of conflict over values. Clearly, there are benefits in terms of organisational coherence for all employees to be involved in the drafting of the values statement, especially in relation to the education sector where there is a clear ethic of public service and care. Importantly, however, statements 3 and 4 suggest that although professionals are aware of corporate mission statements and organisational values, they are not always involved in the process of drafting such documentation. Unless all employees are included as part of the process of agreement over a set of organisational values, there will remain the possibility of dissent or ignorance within the workforce. Interestingly, statement 5 indicated only half of teachers believed that their colleagues adhered to their organisation's values compared with a much higher figure for business. This is a major concern as it infers a lack of coherence within the organisation's culture, and may reflect more profound concerns relating to

Government policy on education. Perhaps the most illuminating data was generated from statement 6 and 7; whereas a majority are in some form of conflict with the values of the organisation, few are prepared to act as a whistleblower. Finally, in section four of the questionnaire, teachers reported concerns with intimidation, the threat of redundancy and reactive decision-making. In general, however, most teachers felt that most leaders did try to practise professional standards albeit that they behaviour was occasionally flawed.

The views of teachers generated through co-constructed conversations developed stories of toxic leaders. The key themes that emerged from these conversations revolved around: the emotional impact of insensitive managers, the imposition of unfair or unrealistic demands, the impact of New Public Management techniques (NPM) and the absence of protection. Although there was recognition of the impact of managerial pressures on teachers, most sought to allocate the responsibility for toxicity to individual leaders rather than blame the education system as such. These findings would suggest that teachers identify NPM as a contextual factor in the manifestation of toxic behaviours but not as a pivotal causal factor. This observation echoes much of the literature on dark personality discussed elsewhere (Schyns, 2015) and infers that many of the behaviours identified correspond more with those characteristics associated with narcissistic self-interest and the micro-politics of institutional life rather than pyschopathy. In this respect, we could tentatively think in terms of toxic leadership in 'lighter' (Boddy, 2015) terms in the case of educational institutions than has been the case of some 'darker' business organisations where psychopathy was embedded, as in the case of Enron.

There is also a clear need to address the role of individual leader figures in relation to toxicity, for as Cheang and Appelbaum (2015: 166) recognise, 'an important influence on the performance of an organisation derives from its managerial culture [and] the personality at the top manager since his/her personality will most greatly impact the managerial culture… and an organisation is largely driven by its leaders'. The data infers that senior leaders do need to revisit the manner in which they espouse the values of the organisation and engage more proactively with fellow professionals. Although senior leaders do not appear to engage in a policy of toxic behaviours, they remain responsible for addressing the issue among middle managers who interact more often with teaching staff. This research mirrors the findings of Ghadi and Fernando (2013) in which they argue that employees' positive attitudes to work can be reinforced or undermined by leadership behaviours.

The impact of toxic leadership behaviours on work engagement is therefore an important economic as well as moral issue which must be addressed. As Cohen (1993) recognised, organisational cultures are a combination of formal and informal components that interact to set social norms and expectations of behaviour. Ardichvili et al. (2010: 357) observed that 'an ethical culture is associated with a structure that provides for equally distributed authority and shared accountability. It also has policies such as an ethical code of conduct that is... enforced'. In terms of the formal components of an organisational culture, effective action may be taken through inclusive and thorough policy-making that embeds appropriate behaviours for all employees. Once this formal structure is in place, it is more likely that informal components will fall into line with established expectations. The findings from this study suggest that although

policies may be in place, these are not always embedded fully and acted upon. Such an observation should encourage organisational leaders to review the effectiveness of their policy statements and their implementation.

For some observers, such as Uhl-Bien and Carsten (2010: 367), toxicity is inherently linked to the traditional bureaucratic, top-down model of leadership. For such observers, a move to distributed forms of leadership that is based on the premise of shared leadership 'promotes responsible leadership and accountability [and in doing so helps]... maintain ethicality' (Uhl-Bien and Carsten, 2010: 368). Although superficially the dispersal of leadership may appear appealing, it should not be undertaken without appropriate training of employees. If not, we could not guarantee that toxicity would not spread to, or indeed emerge from, lower levels within the organisation. Finally, we should look to empowering all employees with the power of 'upward ethical leadership' Uhl-Bien and Carsten (2010: 371) wherein employees are encouraged through appropriate channels to challenge toxicity pro-actively. Such a position not only requires courage on behalf of employees but also recognisable and safe procedures for combating toxicity. Although procedures do exist within the SFC sector to complain about inappropriate behaviours, little empirical research has been undertaken to investigate the scale of complaints.

Conclusion:

This study of the experiences of Sixth Form College teachers reflected research reported elsewhere in the business environment in the USA (Gini, 2010; Ghadi and Fernando, 2013) and UK (May and Pardey, 2013) as well nursing (Speedy, 2005; Murray, 2010) and the military (Williams, 2005; Reed, 2008). As such it would appear that there is a problem in post-industrial organisational life. In specific terms, the problem that appears to exist across sectors and nations is one of excessive and unaccountable power that is held in the hands of particular types of people. In part, this problem is the result of the concentration of legitimate power within the managerial cadre and, as Boddy (2015) notes, those with pyschopathic tendencies are drawn disproportionately to positions of organisational power. This bureaucratisation of organisational life was recognised early in the twentieth century by Weber as creating new social norms and social affiliation that 'reduces every worker to a cog in this bureaucratic machine and, seeing himself in this light, he will merely ask how to transform himself… to a bigger cog…' (Weber, 1994). In part then, one root cause of toxicity is to found in the nature of late modern organisations and in the people who manage.

This study also echoed the debate over whether socio-genic or bio-genic drivers are primarily responsible for toxicity within organisations. For Critical Theorist thinkers, such as Juergen Habermas (1984-1987), societal ills such as toxicity and the demoralisation are the result of late capitalist economic relations and the lack of democratic transparency in the workplace. Although this paper acknowledges the deleterious impact of New Public Management on teachers and an audit culture of their daily work, it suggests that toxicity is largely attributable to the failings of individuals and organisational systems rather than a direct consequence of NPM. Further research should be undertaken into what personality types are attracted to positions of power and

how these personality types relate to toxic forms of behaviour, as well as comparing organisational types both in the Public and Private sector for toxicity.

Finally, this paper suggests that leaders should display 'process integrity' (Ardichvili et al., 2010:362) as role models for the organisation as a whole. This invective requires all managers who hold some responsibility over others to behave in an exemplary fashion and display ethical behaviours at work. Furthermore, this paper contributes to the existing research in other organisational sectors that suggests leaders work to embed ethical standards within their organisation's culture. In education, this should not be such a challenge as in other sectors, as there already exists the ethic of care and a professional code of behaviour. The challenge for leaders in colleges is to inculcate a values-based system that celebrates colleagues as fellow professionals and that encourages 'whistle-blowing'. This is a significant challenge for many managers as their position of legitimate power enables them to exercise both 'legitimate' and 'coercive power' over colleagues based on their 'expert status' and professional trust within the organisational hierarchy (French and Raven, 1959).

Organisational development in the twentieth-first century will be determined by a multitude of factors, not least the example provided by institutional leaders. In those postmodern organisations (Clegg, 1999; Clegg et al. 2005) that display a de-layered organisational structure and promote flexible work roles, it may well be easier to inculcate a reformed organisational culture that is based on mutual respect, trust and professional support. Distributed forms of leadership, however, may be a short-sighted solution to toxicity and a recipe for extended forms of work for little reward (Fitzgerald and Gunter, 2006; Lumby, 2013), or indeed, merely recruit more inappropriate people into managing others. In those late modern organisations, such as educational institutions, that persist and are predicated on the exercise of asymmetric power-relations, effective measures need to be implemented that identifies, tackles and ends toxicity. This imperative requires sustained and genuine commitment on behalf of Government, employment sectors, organisations, and especially enlightened individuals.

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