Investigating the CEO of a MAT: examine practices and positions on 'the street'

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**Investigating the CEO of a MAT: Examining the Practices
and Positions on 'the street.'**

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Abstract:	The emergence of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) as leaders of educational service providers, is positioned in multi academy trusts (MATs), the preferred structure of schooling in England. Within this structure, the CEO position is distinct and different from previous constructs of headteachers, since the CEO operates at both street-level, that is within the MAT, and beyond 'the street.' In this article, I argue that a new conceptualisation of the headteacher is needed to explain the emerging position and practices of the CEO. These include the interface with the market, adopting entrepreneurial dispositions and constructing professional and business networks. I typologise these practices and positioning through the analysis of empirical data gathered from the Leadership of the Lawrence Trust Project and its CEO KT Edwards.

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Investigating the CEO of a MAT: Examining Practices and Positions on ‘the street’

Abstract

The emergence of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) as leaders of educational service providers, is positioned in multi academy trusts (MATs), the preferred structure of schooling in England. Within this structure, the CEO position is distinct and different from previous constructs of headteachers, since the CEO operates at both street-level, that is within the MAT, and beyond ‘the street.’ In this article, I argue that a new conceptualisation of the headteacher is needed to explain the emerging position and practices of the CEO. These include the interface with the market, adopting entrepreneurial dispositions and constructing professional and business networks. I typologise these practices and positioning through the analysis of empirical data gathered from the Leadership of the Lawrence Trust Project and its CEO KT Edwards.

Key words: leadership, headteachers, CEO, multi academy trusts, policy entrepreneur, ethnography.

Introduction

This article reports on research from the Leadership of the Lawrence Trust Project (LLTP) examining the practices and position of the Chief Executive Officer operating in a complex school structure in England known as a Multi Academy Trust (MAT).¹ CEOs (sometimes referred to as executive principals) were first appointed in 2004 to run more than one school and are emerging as a new ‘type’ of headteacher overseeing federations, chains of schools or MATs. I investigate the CEO as leader through a socially critical lens ‘where theories may be deployed in ways which challenge interpretations whose legitimacy, indeed their discursive dominance derives from their claim to be value free’ (Courtney et al 2018:2). In adopting such an approach, one is ‘troubling the epistemological foundation’ (Courtney et al 2018:5) which allows for the researcher as well as the practitioner to make sense of the ‘interplay between policy, agency and structure,’ (Courtney et al 2018:2). In order to do this, I introduce ‘the practitioner’ KT Edwards CEO of the Lawrence Trust (anonymized names). I investigate the foundations of the CEO position through tracing the emergence of Edwards’ agency. Adopting a policy scholarship approach (Grace 1995), I argue that the conceptualisation of the headteacher is changing from that articulated over the last forty years building on the work of Grace (1995, 2000), Hughes (1985), Hall et al (1986), Thomson (2009). I posit the CEO as an emerging construct operates both on and beyond ‘the street’ where position and practice are distinct and different. In defining this space, I deploy thinking from urban design in locating the CEO at both the ‘street-level’ and beyond ‘the street’ - that is the interface between the

education service provider (the MAT) and civic society: parents, pupils and the community. I theorise the ‘street-level’ as a complex space and ‘streetness’ as metaphor for CEO practice. Notably, I present a different way of describing the CEO in their environment through the introduction of a typology I call ‘*Street Practice*.’ I develop the typology by engaging with Lipsky (2010) on street-level bureaucrats, and Kingdon (1995) on policy entrepreneurship.

I then draw on data gathered from the LLTP, using the *Street Practice Typology* to analyse Edwards’ practice and position. In so doing I attempt ‘to make sense of the interplay between policy, Edwards’ agency and structure. I conclude that the position of the CEO as an instantiation of the privatisation of education adopts corporate practices and operates in interrelated complex policy spaces.

The research reported in this article sets out to make a clear contribution in two ways: the first is empirical where I have undertaken an ethnographic embedded study investigating the new phenomenon of the CEO. In so doing I present an emerging construct of the headteacher as CEO of a MAT. The second is conceptual, through the presentation of a novel typology that has four aspects. The first type examines the bureaucratic system at the street-level, where the CEO is part of a hierarchical government system and where power is related to structure and policy implementation. The second is the street-level professional where the interface is viewed between the CEO, whose power and status is gained through accreditation as a recognised education expert, and civic society. The third describes the work of the CEO as an entrepreneur, where the interface involves trading with the market, and where power is about profit. The fourth identifies networks of the CEO as a way s/he brings contractual relations and power flows to the street. The data from the LLTP suggests that these types cannot be inhabited simultaneously but may emerge and recede according to time and context: the CEO may switch seamlessly between them, reflecting the complexities of the position.

KT Edwards as CEO

Utilising studies from business, I argue that whilst Edwards’ position has similarities with earlier versions of the emerging executive headteacher community, his practices and positioning are distinct and different. Jonas et al (1989: 205) describes an executive who ‘has no immediate superiors...with substantial control over the conditions of the workforce,’ whose position is distinct (Buyl et al 2011). The position is complex: CEOs contend with

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3 55 globalisation, rapid technological and social change (Yukl 2013). Chester Barnard's (1968)
4 56 classic work *The Functions of the Executive* (originally published in 1938) describes three
5 57 important executive functions within a formal organization. First, the maintenance of
6 58 organisation communication through establishing 'the scheme of the organisation' (Barnard
7 59 1968). Secondly, securing essential services from individuals, and thirdly formulating
8 60 'purposes and objectives,' (Barnard 1968: 217). These communication networks enable CEOs
9 61 to influence organizational culture through the use of ideologies such as 'the repeated
10 62 articulation of an inspiring vision' (Yukl 2013: 281). The CEO's executive work demonstrates
11 63 entrepreneurial dispositions: single-mindedness and perceived charisma. Executives undertake
12 64 non-executive work serving a 'legitimising function or as a conduit of communication to an
13 65 external audience' (Barnard 1968: 216). These highly visible actions embody service 'beyond
14 66 the call of duty' and become 'stories which are propagated widely' (Yukl 2013: 283). Symbols
15 67 of executive power include generous remuneration packages, the provision of an executive
16 68 office, personal assistant, and other inducements. (McCall 2010). Edwards is illuminative of
17 69 this type of CEO position, and what is happening in England is indicative of similar roles in
18 70 other national systems such as a US school superintendent (for an example of a school
19 71 superintendent implementing change in an urban school district, see Howard et al 2010). The
20 72 MAT, formed in 2012, consists of five secondary schools, a teaching school and three primary
21 73 schools. Edwards, CEO since 2014 enjoys all the trappings of an executive: he has considerable
22 74 discretion within the MAT, organisation communication comes from Edwards, devolved to the
23 75 headteachers of each school.
24 76
25 77 Edwards' position is located in the historical development of headteachers, yet he remains
26 78 different from the traditional headteacher articulated by Hall et al (1986) and Hughes (1985).
27 79 Such studies highlight the realities of headteachers as leading professionals involved primarily
28 80 with the curriculum, assessment and pedagogy, before site-based management introduced from
29 81 1988 (known as the Local Management of Schools), shifted the focus onto markets, staff and
30 82 pupil recruitment and performance data. Subsequently 'super heads' emerged under the New
31 83 Labour (NL) academies programme (see Astle and Ryan 2008; Daniels 2011, Kulz 2015).
32 84 Whilst Edwards shares similarities with heads in post at the time the structure in which Edwards
33 85 operates is different. Since 2010 there has been a proliferation of new school types in England
34 86 (Courtney 2015b), where corporatisation and corporate actors flourish (Gunter et al 2014).
35 87 Edwards is the embodiment of the neoliberal imaginary that conflates education with business
36 88 insinuating the market with public services 'privileging private sector knowledge over

professional knowledge,' (Courtney et al 2018:3). The reimagining of the education as a market space has intensified (Ball 2018), where the corporatisation of state education is an expression of neoliberalism both in England (Courtney 2015a), and internationally (Saltman 2010). Edwards as a corporate actor has replaced the elite business sponsors of academies prevalent under NL such as Lord Harris of Peckham. Edwards is self-made: seizing the opportunity that the academies programme offered, becoming CEO thereby increasing his agency through brokering deals and seeking financial and in-kind sponsorship as he saw fit.

For Wilshaw and Edwards, the structuring context in which their practices function and where they gain recognition has shifted. Wilshaw was speaking to a value system that connected back to headship of the 1960s which incorporated notions of how do we help pupils give of their best, whereas Edwards' values are epitomised in how do we run this organisation in such a way that the data and the brand are protected?

The next section traces the emergence of the CEO position from early conceptualisations of headteachers to the evolving new community of executive heads and CEOs.

The emergence of the CEO

Research suggests that the conceptualisation of headteachers is connected to the micro contexts of headship and the macro political, ideological and structural dimensions of education (Gunter et al. 1999: xi). This relationship between agency and structure is reflected in both biographies of and by headteachers (for example Marie Stubbs' 2003 *Ahead of the Class*) and primary research on headship: (Gunter, 2001, 2012b; Thomson, 2009; Ball 1987; Grace, 1995; Gunter et al, 1999; Kulz, 2015). What is evident from such accounts is a focus on the individual at the head of the organisation, where notions of control, direction and mandate are located. For example, Taylor's (1968) work on the professionalization of headship, and Coulson's (1978,1985,1986,1990), studies which saw primary headship blending personal control with moral authority where the head was pivotal, proprietorial and paternalistic, established an emerging new construct of the head teacher. Hughes' (1985) study of high school heads conceptualised interdependent elements of headship: that of the lead professional and chief executive where the practice of the headteacher consisted of an interface not only with the LA, parents and teachers, but with the wider community. This core focus on headteacher dominance (and even autocracy) was encapsulated in Grace's (1995) analysis that traces the identity of the

headteacher from the mid nineteenth century where heads were constituted as male authoritarian figureheads. Whilst the role has been re-contextualised in the late twentieth century around notions of 'first among equals' and collegiality (Grace, 1995), the prevalence of the independent and disciplinarian headmaster tradition has endured (Grace, 1995; Kulz, 2015). Whilst heads were involved in the core elements of schooling - acting as the lead professional, implementing personal educational philosophies and teaching - research began to give accounts of the tensions in identity and practice (e.g. Ribbins and Marland 1994), and where Hall et al (1986: 71) concluded that traditional models of headship were no longer appropriate 'because of the increasing demands of government policy.'

When New Labour took office in 1997, the emphasis on the charismatic and heroic headteacher role continued. Headship was further re-cultured becoming 'a risky business' illustrated in Thomson's (2009) study. The restructuring of headteachers' professional and pedagogic identity with the marginalisation of 'the professional' took place, (Gunter 2001, 2004, 2012a; Gunter and Thomson 2009; Ball 2013). Through the neoliberal project, public services, including schools, adopted marketing and managerial values with the emergence of the senior manager and school business manager (Gunter, 2004), and where intensive performativity was evident (Ball, 2003; Ball and Junemann 2012; Gunter and Fitzgerald 2013).

The head had to be a transformational leader: the answer to school improvement. Some successful 'inspirational' headteachers, embodying preferred models of leadership legitimised through bespoke training programmes provided by the National College for School Leadership, were invited to advise the Government on school improvement (Gunter 2012a). A policy elite was created, comprising government ministers, heads, representatives from HEIs and business. This redefining of the headteacher continued under the Conservative governments from 2010 (in formal coalition 2010 - 2015) with the introduction of new qualifications for Executive Headteachers (NPQEL), referencing 'non-school contexts' including business (DfE 2017). With MATs playing 'a central role in the school system,' (DfE, 2016), a reculturing of leadership was evident with the focus on school to school support through 'system leadership' (Hopkins and Higham 2007, Greany 2018). Edwards is distinct from previous heads such as Wilshaw, Daniels and the heads in Astle and Ryan's (2008) book, because he oversees a domain which is complexly organised and constructed through acquisitions based around pragmatic business rationales, rather than Wilshaw's social mobility narrative that framed his tenure as head of Mossbourne Academy (Kulz 2015). Edwards' executive function is far more

aligned with corporate business; whilst he holds the appropriate accreditation rendering him 'an expert,' he operates in other non-educational networks that provide legitimacy and business opportunities. Given this new type of role and associated practice means that much of the normative literatures about effective and improving organisational leadership are outdated, as illustrated by Gunter et al's (2018) characterisation of corporatisation as a form of 'luxury leadership'. Thus, a new conceptualisation of headteacher is needed because their position and practices often lie beyond one school.

The CEO's spaces: interpreting 'the street'

I conceive the street-level as complex 'representational spaces' (Lefebvre, 2014: 291), where occupiers perceive the street in distinct ways. From an urban design perspective, the street has a clear identity yet is aligned to the system: seen as a 'total network when repeating relationships are sufficiently regular and predicable,' (Lynch 1960: 60). In this context I maintain the street is formed of multitudinous spaces consisting of buildings, corridors, classrooms, community areas, and offices that constitute one stratum of a complex organisational structure that forms a MAT. It is a homogenous space where there are explicitly and implicitly shared rules. Whilst scholars writing on urbanism maintain that the street is the public space, (Jacobs 1961; Lynch 1960) in the case of the CEO's 'street,' access is limited: it is not open to all. Whilst it is an 'arena for social expression' (Moughtin and Mertens 2003: 131), it is controlled through the deployment of surveillance techniques or 'eyes on the street,' (Jacobs 1961). These involve agents monitoring the street, senior personnel observing and the utilisation of electronic devices. The street is the site of dynamic interactions that are situated and normalising.

The 'street people' comprise of pupils, parents and visitors interconnecting through shared street language and culture. Street ties link them to others on the street, who comprise front-line workers. When these ties become formalised the citizen becomes the client. Those 'front-line workers' who have direct contact with citizens and clients are typically teachers, other professionals, support staff (Lipsky 1980). They display high levels of discretion to accommodate their clients varied requirements, for example, parents need official information regarding their child, comprising progress data, attendance, and behaviour records, whereas pupils enjoy a more systematic and enduring encounter with the front-line workers who support learning, record and measure progress. Clients operating at the street-level are non-voluntary,

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189 they do not purchase the service and have little choice in an alternative if they become
190 dissatisfied, (Lipsky, 2010: 54).

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192 The street is the space where the state and its citizens come together: a place of social
193 encounters where the action takes place through the interface with the front-line worker and
194 the citizens. The CEO embodies ‘streetness’- a metaphor for the assimilation of the work of
195 the street. Streetness, conceptually, is the symbolic interface of the CEO and other actors who
196 are situated on and beyond ‘the street.’

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198 **A new name- ‘Street Practice Typology’**

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200 I propose four ways of understanding the position-taking and positioning of the CEO within
201 this complex space. As a ‘new agent’ the CEO needs a new conceptualisation. In this section
202 I argue that the CEO exhibits some elements of the front-line worker referred to as a Street-
203 Level Bureaucrat as devised by Lipsky (2010). However, I argue that the CEO does not operate
204 at the street-level solely as a Bureaucrat but embodies elements of a Street-Level Professional,
205 a Street-Level Policy Entrepreneur, (Kingdon 1984; Arnold, 2015), and that of a Policy
206 Networker, Entrepreneur and Broker. There are common features of all four types: the CEO is
207 a public official interfacing with citizens, undertaking their work on the street in a micro
208 network with both vertical and horizontal relations yet the boundaries of the street are
209 permeable and changing, (Lipsky 2010).

210
211 In Figure 1, I conceptualise the CEO position through the Street Practice typology. I maintain
212 that the CEO adopts certain practices of all four perspectives in the course of his/her work.

213 **Figure 1 Street Practice Typology**

214	Commorancy	Practice	Autonomy/level of discretion
Street-level Bureaucrat	<i>situated</i> on the Street. Operates on the front line. Member of an epistemic community works at street-level in micro-networks, both vertical and horizontal.	Interface with citizens/clients: fleeting, can be enduring. Judgements based on individual interactions with citizens/clients. Pragmatic in work practices. Motivated to protect discretion; committed to public service.	Autonomy derived from position in policy implementation. Autonomy is paradoxically both highly discretionary, yet rule bound. Maintains and expands autonomy within the boundary of formal legal frameworks and rules at the street-level. Compliance is situational
Street-Level Professional	<i>Walks</i> the street but occupies other professional spaces beyond, at local, regional level. Occupies spaces of epistemic sharing.	Interface with citizens/clients and local community is fleeting Formally qualified (graduate) has undergone lengthy professional training Uses some theory, but relies on personal experience, common sense knowledge. Interfaces with: CEOs, government agents, other professionals Can be resistant to administrative control Adopts flexible and responsive practices Motivated in 'being of service' and 'transforming lives'	Autonomous on the street and beyond the street Expects wide discretionary powers given 'expert' training. Conduit for policy implementation: implements policy that already exists Holds accreditation e.g. QTS, NLE, NPQH Member of National Associations controlled through professional code of ethics. Membership privileged and prestigious. Has operational control within MAT, uses professional judgement. Exerts influence: formally and informally.
Street-Level Policy Entrepreneur	<i>Visits</i> the street. Occupies professional spaces beyond the street: local, regional, national, international. Occupies spaces of epistemic exchanges and advocacy. Some spaces are opaque.	Resides in a variety of professional policy networks Visits the street as ambassador of the Trust Pivotal in policy implementation Uses corporate language and practices Success corroborated by state-controlled regimes enhancing reputation. Motivated by rewards such as increased agency, and opportunity to promote own values.	Expresses state social justice/equality agendas Autonomous in decision making. Reports to Trust Board Has executive function resulting in considerable discretionary powers Holds Non-Exec Directorships/ other positions outside the MAT.
Policy Networker, entrepreneur and broker	Occupies spaces <i>beyond</i> the street, takes streetness and imposes it, brokers deals in business networks. Some networks are unknown.	Corporate agent, makes business connections, cultivates networks Creates and sells products Promotes brand in public arenas Highly flexible and mobile in approach Has capacity to further business opportunities internationally. Motivated by profit, the market.	High degree of discretion, Power enacted through autonomy Business deals made beyond board level Accountability imprecise

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The typology is explained in more detail.

The Street-Level Bureaucrat

As a Street-Level Bureaucrat, the CEO interfaces with clients, colleagues and other street-level bureaucrats in epistemic communities. I draw on Lipsky’s (2010) ground breaking research on street-level bureaucrats namely ‘public service workers, who interact with the citizens in the course of their jobs,’ with their work ‘often hidden from public view,’ (Lipsky, 2010: xvii). Street-Level Bureaucrats have longevity, usually holding their positions longer than politicians, (Lipsky 2010: xviii). Within the educational context they work on ‘the street’ as administrators interrogating data, preparing reports, and teaching. Authority is delegated from the centre because the professional frameworks that govern them, (Lipsky 2010). Thus, their work is constrained by rules on the street; however, with few direct supervisors, the CEO as a Street-Level Bureaucrat is able to exercise power. Consequently, compliance is situational using discretion ‘not only as policy making actors ...but as policy formers,’ (Hupe and Hill 2007: 283).

For the CEO as Street-Level Bureaucrat, the operational place *can be* located at the bottom of the policy hierarchy on the street, yet the position of the CEO extends to the Street-Level Professional.

The Street-Level Professional

As a Professional the CEO *walks* the street but occupies other professional spaces of epistemic sharing. Professionalism has been ‘renovated’ as a concept: (Evans 2008), is externally imposed, where the professional is the efficient deliverer of a ‘predetermined product’ and where professions have clients, (Ozga, 1995; and Troman, 1996). Professionalism is typified by its changing nature, it is in not some static absolute, (Holroyd, 2000; Helsby, 1999). Hoyle (1995) conceptualises a professional as acquiring a set of skills through competency-based training. Professional judgements made by the Street-Level Professional are based on expertise gained through accreditation programmes. As a Professional, the CEO adopts professional language, with membership of professional groups maintaining and enhancing status.

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Hughes' (1985) research recognised that heads had to be 'outward looking and cosmopolitan,' (Hughes 1985: 275) as chief executive and leading professional. The leading professional exerts influence eliciting the cooperation of colleagues through 'informal interactions' that take place in staff rooms and corridors which are 'highly political occasions providing collegial influence in both directions,' (Hughes 1985: 282). The chief executive 'legitimises hierarchy,' whilst 'not restricting professional autonomy,' (Hughes 1985: 276). Although these roles interpenetrate, the CE's position is external, located beyond the street. The Street-Level Professional as the efficient deliverer of a 'predetermined product' has influence interacting with clients beyond the street, the extension of these external activities is practised by the Street-Level Policy Entrepreneur.

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258 The Street-Level Policy Entrepreneur

The Policy Entrepreneur *visits* the street as ambassador observing and monitoring activities, remaining emotionally detached and therefore pivotal in policy implementation. In conceptualizing the Policy Entrepreneur, I draw upon research from policy studies specifically Kingdon (1984) who conceived policy entrepreneurs (PEs) acting as advocates, located: 'in or out of government, either elected or appointed...' Kingdon (1984:129). They are members of networks, acting as broker and influencer, motivated by job security, career advancement, expanding agency, promoting their own values, (Kingdon 1984). PE's are willing to invest 'hopeful of a future return,' (Kingdon 1984: 129), thus enhancing reputation. They attempt to 'soften-up' policy communities through giving speeches, occupying policy/specialist communities, or affording repeated attention to an issue, (Kingdon 1984).

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Within the typology I posit that the CEO operating at the street-level as a Policy Entrepreneur (rather than at the federal government level as in Kingdon's study) interfaces with a variety of policy networks. These are often opaque, located beyond the street at local, regional, and national levels consisting of epistemic exchanges and advocacy. The Policy Entrepreneur is politically astute, often remaining in position during the course of

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several policy reform windows, which are used to leverage resources and exploit opportunities to influence policy, (Kingdon, 1984).

In practice, the CEO is more entrepreneurial in seeking opportunities for commissions and takeovers. S/he oversees the operations and the provision of education services including the selling of these services to the external market. As Policy Entrepreneur the CEO reports directly to the Trust board but has prime executive function resulting in considerable discretionary powers, including when, where and who to visit at street-level.

Within the typology the CEO often holds non-executive positions outside the organisational structure forming collegial ties within corporate networks, allowing access to policy elites to leverage influence. The interface with the market is crucial as the Policy Entrepreneur will engage as an ‘expert of truth,’ (Rose 1999 in Ball 2012: 40), in advocating, framing, and packaging policy ideas often for profit. The articulation and re-articulation of success narratives increases spheres of influence and agency within these networks. As the agent of government policy, the Policy Entrepreneur is bound by government legislation, but as the interpreter of policy may use discretion to oppose it. However, the Policy Entrepreneur operates within other spaces as a Policy Networker, Entrepreneur and Broker: the fourth conceptualisation in the typology.

Beyond the street: The Policy Networker, Entrepreneur and Broker

Ball and Junemann (2012) identify policy entrepreneurs as ‘boundary spanners’- transnational operators moving in extensive interconnected networks operating at the macro level. The typology does not focus on these elite policy entrepreneurs per se, rather, I identify the CEO here as a Policy Networker Entrepreneur and Broker situated in more than one location within the policy community. These spaces lie beyond ‘the street’ and may span national boundaries.

For the CEO the ‘business mission’ is a strong imperative. The Policy Networker, Entrepreneur and Broker occupies spaces *beyond* the street, taking his/her ‘streetness’ and imposing it, using it to broker deals. These spaces consist of powerful networks where the

brand is promoted, and where business opportunities are sought. The Policy Networker has capacity to extend networks internationally if opportunities arise. Many of these networks are opaque and not always traceable, (Gunter, 2012a). Accountability is nebulous. These networks are ‘...shaped by constant interaction between groups of linked professionals, managers and experts,’ (Lawn and Lingard 2002: 292) here the Policy Networker thrives, projecting power and getting the deal done.

Researching a CEO: methodology and methods

Ethnography allows data to be gathered in their naturalistic setting (Lofland 1971). This approach was appropriate given data gathered are more descriptive than prescriptive, epistemologically inductive and ‘often unstructured,’ (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). A purely observational role enables the researcher to remain detached from the social setting, not seeking to disturb what is being observed. However, ‘there are epistemological assumptions underlying its use.’ (Scott and Usher 2011: 108), including assumptions that the researcher should detach any preconceptions in the construction of reality. However, reflexivity recognizes that researchers are inescapably part of the social world they are researching, (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Although a former headteacher, I was a stranger to a MAT. My role was non-participative, that of the ‘professional stranger’ (Agar, 1980), observing the participant.

My choice in focussing on one CEO in one context as ‘micro ethnography,’ (LeCompte and Preissle 1993: 8) represented a subset of the larger educational system, similar Wolcott’s (1973) study. I sought to discover the ‘complex specificness’ (Geertz 1973:26) where the ‘effective story should be specific and circumstantial,’ (Walcott 1995:174). Such a process allowed for cultural sharing between researcher and participant to attempt to make sense of the interplay between policy, agency and structure. Whilst not claiming that Edwards is representative of CEOs, the data presents an ‘instantiation of the possible,’ (Bourdieu 1998, quoted in Courtney 2015c:76).

Access was negotiated directly through Edwards’ PA. Fieldwork was undertaken over a twelve-month period; I observed Edwards in Executive Team and network meetings, those

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337 with colleagues, parents, governors and actors from other networks. I attended a staff
338 recruitment morning, open days, official functions. During observations, I remained an
339 unobtrusive, passive observer sitting out of Edwards’ sight line. FWN were constructed in
340 a systematic way using Spradley’s (1980) heuristic, recording data at five-minute intervals.
341 Many ‘informal’ conversations with Edwards provided rich data where I was able to ask
342 questions on what I had previously observed. I wrote these up as FWN after the event.

343
344 Shadowing school principals as a distinctive methodological approach (Walcott 1973;
345 Gronn 2009, Czarniawska 2007) afforded insights into the less obvious aspects of
346 Edwards’ work and provided opportunities for him to explain his actions. On these
347 occasions I followed Edwards ‘in his stride’ remaining behind him but close enough to
348 hear what was being said, occasionally asking questions. I walked the corridors, visited
349 lessons, and travelled to other schools with him.

350
351 Four semi-structured interviews were conducted each with a specific focus and transcribed.
352 Firstly, a career history interview (CHI); second, Edwards’ professional networks (NWI);
353 thirdly, practices, values and beliefs (with Best Practice Network, BPI) and finally the
354 structure of the MAT (STRI). Transcripts were member checked, (Lincoln and Guba 1985).
355 To aid in triangulation, primary sources were analysed using ten stages of documentary
356 analysis (Fitzgerald 2012). All names were anonymised.

357
358 The four categories described in the *Street Practice Typology* provided broad themes
359 (nodes) to code the interview data using NVivo software, for example I used nodes of:
360 ‘MATs and Academies;’ ‘structure;’ ‘career;’ ‘networks.’ I extrapolated these data using
361 more detailed cases to reflect different aspects of each node. I identified the same key
362 themes from primary sources and fieldwork notes. This process was iterative, enabling
363 analysis and explanation of the position and practices of Edwards.

364 **Analysis - The CEO and ‘streetness’**

365 Part of Edwards’ streetness is his ability to locate himself on the street (his executive office
366 is in one of the schools), assuming the characteristics of the front-line worker, adopting

practices of 'the street.' These include his appearance: he is impeccably dressed, yet he adopts 'the look' of the street to assimilate: on morning duty he wears a high visibility jacket, he picks up litter in corridors. He interacts with pupils, colleagues, parents, consciously adapting his identity:

'I have many badges, I only wear the badge which states what school I'm in sometimes it says 'staff' sometimes it says headteacher... (CHI 26/9/17).

Edwards' roles are multifarious and fluid, his profile lists his titles: 'Chief Executive Officer and Academy Principal, National Leader of Education, Executive Principal, Headteacher,' all of which give him agency. He adopts different practices depending where he is situated and with whom he interfaces. Some interactions are informal: a cheery 'good morning', a quick look at a child's planner, a brief conversation about pupil behaviour, a joke with support staff. Whilst on the street he embodies Trust power and policy: walking on a particular side of the corridor, addressing 'clients' in the 'Trust' way with 'Sir' or 'Miss.' As he enters classrooms, pupils stand up to address him. Edwards' streetness is manifested in his interactions, his language and praxis evolved from his career history as a front-line worker who 'did everything' living five minutes from school.' (CHI 26/9/17).

Edwards as a Street-Level Bureaucrat

As a Bureaucrat Edwards is *situated* on the street operating on the front-line. He replicates and models the expected behaviours of other front-line workers, whilst at the same time using his power to monitor that Trust policy is enacted: all teachers must greet their pupils outside their classrooms; senior staff, including Edwards check pupils' uniform on entry to the school. As a Bureaucrat, Edwards is bound by the formal legal frameworks within the MAT structure: 'Everything is scripted. Absolutely scripted. Sometimes it might seem I'm winging it but I'm not - I keep to the script.' (CHI 26/9/17). He enacts policy when describing the rigorous due diligence processes:

...we are all involved... for a school that we have been asked to take-over... this include[s] everything from the types of funding stream, ...the staffing, the desktop analysis, legals (sic), the finance. (BPI 5/12/17).

Unlike other front-line workers, his movement on the street is discretionary, his name badge emblematic of his autonomy, allows access to all areas; he holds impromptu

meetings in headteachers' offices, appearing in staff rooms interacting with clients. Conversations are often micropolitical in leveraging information and extracting opinions (Hughes 1985). He remains close to the citizens undertaking non-executive work on the front-line: 'I was pupil support manager for two years on the corridors with a walkie talkie, sorting them out,' (CHI 26/9/17).

Whilst Edwards' origin is 'in the policy process,' Lipsky (2010: xii), located in the policy space of the street, outlasting elite policy entrepreneurs, his position as CEO is more nuanced: he also occupies different spaces of the Street-Level Professional.

Edwards as a Street-level Professional

Edwards does not remain 'on the street,' his position allows him access to other networks retaining his 'streetness' through his repeated articulation of the trust vision, (Yukl 2013). As a Street-Level Professional he *walks* the street. His profile lists his professional credentials: 'a National leader of Education... a key driver in the Beacon School movement...' (LT Website accessed 29/9/17). He has undergone professional 'competency-based training,' Hoyle (1975), gaining accreditation to access other networks. As the 'lead professional,' Edwards ensures 'bureaucratic formalisation whilst not restricting professional autonomy,' Hughes (1985:276), shown when working elsewhere: 'We went and left Sarah here, I said I'm not going to interfere. I didn't,' yet still needing affirmation he tells me: 'But she rang me.' (CHI 26/9/17).

As an SLP, Edwards uses opportunities to articulate the Trust's success and enhance his agency. During a school visit which coincided with a new parents' meeting, he entered the room unannounced, introduced himself, gave an impromptu speech about the success of the Trust and the excellence of the school. (FWN 10/10/17). The interaction was fleeting and unscripted. Similarly, his contribution to a DfE networking event allowed him to interact with others in a space of epistemic sharing. As the main presenter Edwards 'softened-up' (Kingdom 1984) colleagues through persuasive arguments around successful MATs. However, Edwards moves beyond these spaces and embodies characteristics of the entrepreneur.

The CEO as Street-Level Policy Entrepreneur

As a Policy Entrepreneur, Edwards embodies government policy advising on pupil behaviour, leadership and school improvement. In implementing policy, he describes Trust practices ensuring each school is performing to expectations:

...we have the same standards across the trust, that's my job and the exec team to keep the standards, school improvement starts...from the top. (BPI 5/12/17).

As a Policy Entrepreneur, Edwards' network spaces are loosely regulated. He still *visits* the street operating 'from within' yet he has considerable network capital: he sustains and engenders relationships, whilst not remaining in elite policy spaces. Such relationships give him legitimacy. His keenness to justify his influence through name checking his connections belies his insecurities whilst portraying an exterior confidence shown through his intimate knowledge of the epistemic community. He recalls meetings with Tony Blair 'I was involved in some symposiums at Downing Street.,' (CHI 26/9/17), Lord Nash (Under Secretary of State for Schools 2013-2017), and Andrew Adonis, (Minister of State for Education under NL). He names politicians who have visited:

- the Schools' Minister Nick Gibb, he's been here twice, we got Michael Gove here before he was Education Minister... (NI, 17/4/18).

He operates in a variety of interconnected spaces, effortlessly moving in and out, whether it is negotiating with Ofsted inspectors:

So, I said 'come on what's the score?'
He [Ofsted Inspector] said: 'It's special measures,'
and I said: 'don't if you give it special measures it will close, but if you give it satisfactory... and then make it a bad satisfactory we are coming in,'
and he did,' (CHI 26/9/17).

or appearing in front of a government Select Committee. Edwards' executive function incorporates considerable discretionary power; as an entrepreneur there is an assessment of the risk and 'return' on his investment in the form of acquiring assets:

We are fairly ruthless ... if it doesn't benefit the trust...why would we do it?
we need to gather assets, assets mean people... (BPI 5/12/17).

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3 467 This work enables him to construct and expand his agency through the creation of
4 468 networks which interrelate. Here, Edwards, operating beyond the street, becomes a
5 469 networker, broker of business deals and entrepreneur.
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9 471 **The CEO as Policy Networker, Entrepreneur and Broker**
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11 472 Edwards is not highly mobile in that he does not operate within trans-global policy
12 473 networks, instead he has developed extensive local, national policy networks *beyond the*
13 474 *street* which have been cultivated over time:
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16 475 ...I spend a lot of time working with local councillor's, key community
17 476 leaders, people who make a difference, (NI, 17/4/18)
18 477
19 478 gaining access:
20 479 ... through [council leader] who said it would be really good if you could
21 480 meet the [Secretary of State for Education] so I did. I'm very well connected
22 481 with the Chief Education officers... (NI 17/4/18).
23 482
24
25 483 Edwards is a highly skilled networker using his streetness to broker deals and further
26 484 business opportunities, he 'goes to dinners,' sitting on a local business board with the Trust
27 485 sponsoring its awards evening. He is a non-executive director of a health trust, board
28 486 member and safeguarding officer of a charitable foundation. The returns are lucrative: 'I
29 487 got an Adidas kit deal for our schools.' (NI, 17/4/18). He is chair of New Start Foundation
30 488 (a pseudonym) a charity, funding facilities in local communities; the Trust has benefitted:
31 489 'we put a bid in, we have brought in about £2 million,' (NI, 17/4/18). Involvement with
32 490 New Start provides access to diverse business networks: Edwards has visited the Houses
33 491 of Parliament 'pedalling' - his term, - an online learning resource. He acknowledges 'he is
34 492 known in these circles,' yet he tells me that he has 'pulled back' from government
35 493 involvement directly as it too time consuming. His focus lies in the expanding market for
36 494 online products, the lucrative commissions he undertakes 'involving six figure sums' in
37 495 turning around failing schools and his involvement in a project overseas.
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41 497 Edwards as a Policy Networker, Entrepreneur and Broker focuses on the Trust brand,
42 498 actively networking and brokering deals.
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44 499

500 Discussion

501 The Street Practice Typology provides a useful articulation of the emerging practices of
502 the MAT CEO role. Whilst not claiming any generalities, Edwards' case remains
503 particular, the implications of study are broad, (Walcott 1995). Empirical data gathered in
504 situ provides unique insights into the practices and positioning of a CEO. It reveals that
505 headship is being re-cultured and reconceptualised to incorporate distinct and new practices
506 within a complex organisational structure which has the legal status of a business. It builds
507 on work by Kulz (2015, 2017) on the headship of one academy, to examine CEO practice
508 in a MAT. Previous heads of academies operated as Street-Level Bureaucrats and Street-
509 Level Professionals, enjoying institutional autonomy. As CEO, Edwards' practice and
510 position enables him to operate as a *Street-Level Bureaucrat*, a *Street-level Professional*, a
511 *Street-level Policy Entrepreneur* and as a *Policy Networker, Entrepreneur and Broker*. The
512 study has enabled a 'lifting of the veil' to reveal clear distinctions between Edwards as
513 CEO and previous executive headteachers in charge of single academies such as the
514 **Principal in Kulz (2017) book**. These are apparent in three ways: through Edwards'
515 position and the structure of the MAT; through his praxis, control, discretion and agency;
516 and through his entrepreneurial disposition.

517
518 *Structure:* Edwards' position was incubated in NL policies enabling headteachers to
519 propagate professional accreditation, locate themselves within elite communities, and for
520 some to lead on school improvement commissions. However, most were Executive
521 Headteachers of one academy - Wilshaw for example the 'captain of his ship,' (Kulz
522 2015:85), whereas Edwards is **the leader**, occupying a far more complex role as CEO of an
523 extensive **business empire** consisting of over a thousand employees, located across four
524 LAs. Edwards embodies the neoliberal agenda of privatising education in England. Whilst
525 not the business owner Edwards, in utilising policy windows became the CEO of an early
526 convertor academy, without an external sponsor, enabling him to extend autonomy,
527 retaining tight control, form policy, recruit corporate assets and decide on expansion. His
528 extensive networks have provided access to the market. The structure of the MAT,
529 incorporating a teaching school as a wholly-owned subsidiary and commercial arm enables
530 Edwards to undertake lucrative commissions, and sell educational products.

Praxis, control, discretion and agency: articulating a vision different from that of the transformational, social mobility narrative, Edwards’ praxis as CEO is pragmatic, perpetuating the brand, simultaneously winning bids and interfacing with the market. Edwards does not necessarily champion government policy, he is able to choose the schools in which he works, refusing to undertake certain commissions thus increasing his agency. His level of discretion is considerable: whilst on the street he demonstrates control in supervising, directing and surveilling his clients. Edwards enjoys freedom from direct external accountability. Unlike other **headteachers**, Edwards is not exposed to public pressures of performativity: his name does not appear on Ofsted reports for example.

Entrepreneurial disposition: Edwards embodies the successful executive. His roots lie within the market, his executive function involves transactions, whether it be taking over schools, building new ones or selling educational products, yet he still remains on ‘the street.’ Consequently, there is a growing synergy between the CEO of education service providers and business, which, for Edwards, has begun to penetrate transnational boundaries.

Conclusion

Such a conceptualisation of the CEO in the Street Practice Typology is important because it explains this new form of leading is positioned both on and beyond ‘the street.’ **The data has presented the CEO as a corporate actor embodying nascent entrepreneurialism through interface with the market. As the position of CEO is emerging within the MAT structure further historical research is needed to investigate practices of CEOs by way of comparison to Directors of Education in England for example. Furthermore, contemporary projects in comparing the CEO with school superintendents or leaders of charter schools in the US would locate MATs within a global context. This would require deploying a range of methodologies and methods in order to move from the single case.**

Notes

1. MATs as the preferred model of school structures, were established as a result of the 2010 Education Act and consist of several academies managed under an exempt charitable trust arrangement directly responsible to the Secretary of State. Academies are independent, non-fee-paying schools. (Parliament, HC 2017).

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Figure 1 Street Practice Typology

	Commorancy	Practice	Autonomy/level of discretion
Street-level Bureaucrat	<p><i>situated</i> on the Street.</p> <p>Operates on the front line.</p> <p>Member of an epistemic community</p> <p>works at street-level in micro-networks, both vertical and horizontal.</p>	<p>Interface with citizens/clients: fleeting, can be enduring.</p> <p>Judgements based on individual interactions with citizens/clients. Pragmatic in work practices.</p> <p>Motivated to protect discretion; committed to public service.</p>	<p>Autonomy derived from position in policy implementation.</p> <p>Autonomy is paradoxically both highly discretionary, yet rule bound.</p> <p>Maintains and expands autonomy within the boundary of formal legal frameworks and rules at the street-level.</p> <p>Compliance is situational</p>
Street-Level Professional	<p><i>Walks</i> the street but occupies other professional spaces beyond, at local, regional level.</p> <p>Occupies spaces of epistemic sharing.</p>	<p>Interface with citizens/clients and local community is fleeting</p> <p>Formally qualified (graduate) has undergone lengthy professional training</p> <p>Uses some theory, but relies on personal experience, common sense knowledge.</p> <p>Interfaces with: CEOs, government agents, other professionals</p> <p>Can be resistant to administrative control</p> <p>Adopts flexible and responsive practices</p> <p>Motivated in 'being of service' and 'transforming lives'</p>	<p>Autonomous on the street and beyond the street</p> <p>Expects wide discretionary powers given 'expert' training.</p> <p>Conduit for policy implementation: implements policy that already exists</p> <p>Holds accreditation e.g. QTS, NLE, NPQH</p> <p>Member of National Associations controlled through professional code of ethics. Membership privileged and prestigious.</p> <p>Has operational control within MAT, uses professional judgement.</p> <p>Exerts influence: formally and informally.</p> <p>Expresses state social justice/equality agendas</p>
Street-Level Policy Entrepreneur	<p><i>Visits</i> the street.</p> <p>Occupies professional spaces beyond the street: local, regional, national, international.</p> <p>Occupies spaces of epistemic exchanges and advocacy.</p> <p>Some spaces are opaque.</p>	<p>Resides in a variety of professional policy networks</p> <p>Visits the street as ambassador of the Trust</p> <p>Pivotal in policy implementation</p> <p>Uses corporate language and practices</p> <p>Success corroborated by state-controlled regimes enhancing reputation.</p> <p>Motivated by rewards such as increased agency, and opportunity to promote own values.</p>	<p>Autonomous in decision making.</p> <p>Reports to Trust Board</p> <p>Has executive function resulting in considerable discretionary powers</p> <p>Holds Non-Exec Directorships/ other positions outside the MAT.</p>
Policy Networker, entrepreneur and broker	<p>Occupies spaces <i>beyond</i> the street, takes streetness and imposes it, brokers deals in business networks.</p> <p>Some networks are unknown.</p>	<p>Corporate agent, makes business connections, cultivates networks</p> <p>Creates and sells products</p> <p>Promotes brand in public arenas</p> <p>Highly flexible and mobile in approach</p> <p>Has capacity to further business opportunities internationally.</p> <p>Motivated by profit, the market.</p>	<p>High degree of discretion,</p> <p>Power enacted through autonomy</p> <p>Business deals made beyond board level</p> <p>Accountability imprecise</p>

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