Further education managers' and lecturers' perspectives and experiences of casual, insecure employment contracts in England: A narrative study

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Abstract

In the most recent data from the UK Government 21% of further education lecturers in England are employed on casual, insecure contracts. This thesis examines the perceptions and experiences of the effects of employment casualisation voiced by further education academic managers and casual lecturers. In a sector of education that is often overlooked the rise of casualisation can cause challenges for both managers and lecturers.

Since the 1990s further education in England has seen sweeping changes following the implementation of the policies of neoliberalism leading to the rise of New Public Management. The introduction of competition and the internal market made funding reliant upon student recruitment, retention and achievement. To cut costs and increase internal profits standardised pay agreements were removed and local pay arrangements implemented, resulting in increased casualisation, and lower salaries and benefits for lecturers. Lecturer recruitment became difficult; lecturer attrition has risen. With the UK Government seeking to boost the economy by increasing the skills of the population, it is imperative further education maintains a stable, committed workforce to deliver and train the employees of the future. In this under-researched field, the potential links between casualisation and workforce dissatisfaction are highlighted.

This autoethnographical, narrative study drew on my personal story of being a casual lecturer, and the experiences of five managers and four other casual lecturers from across the further education landscape in England. Semi-structured interviews, including a personal participatory interview, were conducted, and the concept of using idioms to thematically analyse their narratives was developed. The findings were theoretically framed in a tripartite combination of Foucauldian philosophies, Mechanic's, and Salancik and Pfeffer's organisation dependency theories, and Standing's precariat.

The lecturers expressed challenges with casualisation: financial and job insecurities, feelings of second classness, and resentment of their casual status creating mental health and well-being issues. Power relationships with the managers proved unstable, the lecturers fearful, denuded of their ability to speak out unless financially stable. The managers discussed the challenges they faced, demonstrating an unexpected conflict when managing the casual lecturers due to their own personal experiences of casualisation. This conflict created difficulties for the managers causing additional workload and stress, for themselves and their permanent lecturers. Decasualisation of the lecturing workforce was recommended by both managers and lecturers, and the research investigated the rationale

for, and consequences of, a decasualisation policy which had already been implemented within one further education college prior to the research.

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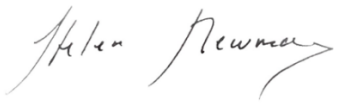
Author's declaration

I, Helen Newman, declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. No part of this thesis has been previously submitted for any other degree at the University of Staffordshire or another institution.

Signed



Helen Newman

Table of contents

Abstract ii
Acknowledgements iv
Author's declaration v
Table of contents vi
List of Tables and Figures xi
Abbreviations xii
Glossary of terms xiii
Employment contract types xiii
FE provider types xiii
Qualifications xiv
1 Introduction 1
1.1 Introduction 1
1.2 Personal and Professional Interest 1
1.3 Professional context of the research 3
1.4 Defining the research 'problem' 4
1.5 The Importance of conducting this research 5
1.6 Definition of key terms and concepts used in the thesis 6
1.6.1 FE casual contract types in FE used in the research 6
1.6.2 Definition of further education, providers and qualification levels 6
1.7 Choice of theoretical framework 6
1.8 Research Design and Methodology 7
1.9 The Research aims and objectives 7
1.9.1 Research aim 7
1.9.2 Research objectives 8
1.9.3 Research questions 8
1.10 Structure of the Thesis 8
2 Literature Review 9
2.1 Introduction 9
2.2 The precariat and the increase of casual work 9

2.3 Effects of FE policy changes, performativity, and managerialism, since 1990 11
2.3.1 FE policy – Conservative Government 1980s - 1997 13
2.3.2 FE policy - New Labour 1997 - 2010....17
2.3.3 FE policy - Conservatives 2010 to 2024 20
2.4 Vacancy rates, and FE lecturers' and managers' pay....23
2.5 FE recruitment and attrition 27
2.6 Casualisation, and lecturers' and managers' working lives 28
2.7 Institutional attitudes towards further education....30
2.8 Gap in the literature....30
2.9 Theoretical framework....31
2.9.1 Selection of a Foucauldian lens....32
2.9.2 Organisation and managerial framework 34
2.10 Conclusion 37
3 Research design and methodology....39
3.1 Introduction 39
3.2 Choice of qualitative research design with interpretive constructivism 39
3.3 Narrative research and autoethnographical choices....41
3.4 Reflexivity, positionality and the participatory interview....43
3.5 Ethical and anonymity considerations 46
3.6 Pilot study....47
3.7 Limitations of the research approach 48
3.8 Validity and reliability 48
3.9 Population and sample 50
3.9.1 FE academic manager sample recruitment strategy 50
3.9.2 FE lecturer sample recruitment strategy 51
3.10 Interview schedules and interview questions 52
3.11 Informed consent and arranging the interviews 53
3.12 Conducting the interviews 54

3.13 My personal interview 55
3.14 Data analysis and theme development 56
3.15 Use of idiom themes 57
3.16 Final idiom theme definition 58
3.16.1 Policy themes 59
3.16.2 Working lives themes 60
3.16.3 Power relationships themes 61
3.17 Narration of the data 62
3.18 Research design and methodology - Reflection and summary 62
3.19 Conclusion 62
4 Findings and analysis 64
4.1 Introduction 64
4.2 Backgrounds of the participants 64
4.3 FE employment contract terminology 65
4.4 Policy findings 66
4.4.1 Balancing the books 67
4.4.2 Any port in a storm 72
4.4.3 Try before you buy 74
4.4.4 Don't kill the goose that lays the golden eggs 76
4.4.5 Policy summary 79
4.5 Working lives findings 79
4.5.1 Living on a knife edge 80
4.5.2 Chains and weak links 86
4.5.3 Working lives summary 94
4.6 Power relationships findings 94
4.6.1 Carrots and sticks 95
4.6.2 The power is in their hands 99
4.6.3 Power relationships summary 105

4.7 Findings summary 105

5 Discussion 106

5.1 Introduction 106

5.2 The precariat and the casual FE lecturer (RQ1, RQ3) 106

5.3 Experiences of the policy of casualisation (RQ1) 108

5.4 FE Pay for casual lecturers (RQ1) 111

5.5 Casualisation - recruitment and retention (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3) 112

5.6 Decasualisation – don't kill the goose that lays the golden eggs (RQ1, RQ2) 113

5.7 Managers - power, and working lives and relationships (RQ2) 114

5.8 Lecturers - power, and working lives and relationships (RQ3) 116

5.9 Conclusion 119

6 Conclusion 122

6.1 Introduction 122

6.2 RQ1 - How is the policy of casualised employment experienced by academic managers and lecturers in English further education? 122

6.2.1 Decasualisation works 123

6.2.2 New government zero-hours policy 124

6.2.3 The precariat 124

6.3 RQ2 - What are FE academic managers' perceptions and experiences of the effects of casualisation upon their FE working lives and relationships? 125

6.4 RQ3 - What are FE casual lecturers' perceptions and experiences of the effects of casualisation upon their FE working lives and relationships? 125

6.4.1 FE casual lecturer pay and conditions 125

6.4.2 Status, working lives and power relationships 126

6.5 Extent to which the research questions have been answered. 127

6.6 Contributions to knowledge 128

6.6.1 Contributions from the stories of the participants 128

6.6.2 The use of idioms as sub-themes in the analysis and findings 129

6.6.3 The use of autoethnography and self-interview 130

6.7 Recommendations for professional practice and policy 131
6.8 Recommendations for further research 132
6.9 Professional learning and research journey 133
6.9.1 Personal employment journey 133
6.9.2 Personal learning journey 135
References 136
Appendices 165
Appendix 1. Definitions of casual contracts used in the research 166
Appendix 2. FE Provider type and FE qualification acronyms 167
Appendix 3. Methods used to identify the literature reviewed in the thesis 168
Appendix 4. Pilot interview schedule 170
Appendix 5. Interview schedule 173
Appendix 6. Biographical questionnaires 176
Appendix 7. Final information sheet 179
Appendix 8. Consent form 182
Appendix 9. Generic email to recruit lecturer participants 183
Appendix 10. Example of initial data analysis and theme development 184
Appendix 11. Initial theme mapping to Idiom themes 188
Appendix 12. Final idiom themes 190
Appendix 13. Policy themes – in depth 191
Appendix 14. Working lives themes – in depth 193
Appendix 15. Power relationship themes – in depth 195
Appendix 16. MPA narrative report 196
Appendix 17. LPB narrative report 203
Appendix 18. Spreadsheet sample- Collation of managers' narrative reports 212
Appendix 19. Spreadsheet sample - Collation of lecturers' narrative reports 213

List of Tables and Figures

List of Tables

Table 2.1 - FE FTE median pay by role type and sector 2022/2023 (DfE, 2024) 24
Table 2.2 - FE job advertisements (FEjobs, 2023) 26
Table 2.3 - Casual lecturers in FE 2022/2023 (DfE, 2024) 26
Table 3.1 - FE academic manager sample – summary and experience 51
Table 3.2 - FE lecturer sample – summary and experience 52
Table 3.3 - Detailed explanation of policy idiom themes 59
Table 3.4 - Detailed explanation of working lives idiom themes 60
Table 3.5 - Detailed explanation of power relationships idiom themes 61

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 – Illustration of Standing's global class structure (Standing, 2021) 10
Figure 2.2 – Comparison of FE, HE and school academic pay 2022/2023 (DfE, 2024; UCU, 2023a; HESA, 2024) 25
Figure 2.3 – Tripartite theoretical framework 32
Figure 2.4 - Pfeffer and Salancik's (2003) FE dependent organisation 36
Figure 2.5 - FE dependent relationship (Mechanic, 1992) 37
Figure 3.1 – The data collection process 53
Figure 5.1 - Suggested change to the precariat 107
Figure 6.1 - Positives of decasualisation 123

Abbreviations

AoC	Association of Colleges
DfE	Department for Education
CPD	Continuing professional development
FE	Further education
FEC	Further education college
FEFC	Further Education Funding Council for England
FETL	Further Education Trust for Leadership
FEWDC	Further Education Workforce Data Collection
FTE	Full-time Equivalent
GFEC	General further education college
HE	Higher education
IFS	Institute for Fiscal Studies
IT	Information technology
IFL	Institute for learning
LSIS	Learning and Skills Improvement Service
LEA	Local Education Authority
NPM	New public management
OBR	Office for Budget Responsibility
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
OPFP	Other private funded provider
PSPF	Private sector public funded provider
QIA	Quality improvement agency
SFC	Sixth form college
TA	Thematic analysis
UCU	University and College Union
VET	Vocational education and training

Glossary of terms

Employment contract types

Agency/Supply	Usually a zero-hours contract. The employee's employment contract is with the Agency who is responsible for all employment rights. There is no direct contractual relationship between the employee and the organisation in which they are working for. On day one of work the agency worker has the right to be told of relevant vacancies within the organisation in which they are working, and after completing twelve weeks the agency worker will have the right to the same terms as an employee who has been appointed directly by the organisation (UK Government, 2022a).
Fixed-term and temporary contracts	Fixed-term and temporary contracts are those which have a specified end date which is set in advance and will finish when a specific task or event has been completed (UK Government, 2022a). The employee has the same rights as a permanent employee (CIPD, 2015).
Permanent variable-hours (term-time-only)/non-permanent variable-hours	In FE this is a contract which is generally used for term-time-only working (UK Government, 2022b). Often staff will be paid monthly with all the work being undertaken within term-time. They are also used to increase or decrease allocated working hours as and when needed.
Permanent variable-hours with minimum guaranteed hours	In FE this is a contract which is generally used for term-time-only working (UK Government, 2022b). Often staff will be paid monthly with all the work being undertaken within term-time. They are also used to increase or decrease allocated working hours as and when needed.
Zero-hours contracts	Zero-hours contracts is a ubiquitous term used when describing an employment contract where there are not set contracted hours of working between the employer and the employee or worker. The contracts can be fixed-term, open ended (no end date) or permanent (stated within the contract).

(DfE, 2024)

FE provider types

FEC	Further education College (incorporating all publicly funded FE providers)
GFEC	General Further Education College (including technical, vocational, tertiary colleges)
SFC	Sixth form college
PSPF	Private sector public funded (including Independent training providers
OPFP	Other public funded provider (includes some HE providers, some Local Authority (LA) providers and some University technical colleges (UTCs), specialist colleges and 16-19 free schools.

(DfE, 2024)

Qualifications

Entry level	Below GCSE level qualification ranging from Entry 1 – Entry 3
Level 2	Equivalent to GCSE level qualifications
Level 3	Equivalent to A level qualifications
T-Level	Technical Level qualification – a vocational qualification designed to be equivalent to A level qualifications

(Gov.uk, 2024)

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The research reported in this thesis investigates the working life experiences and relationships, and the perceptions of further education (FE) managers and lecturers of the use of casual, insecure, employment contracts set within the policy changes in FE since 1992. The research has been influenced by my own personal experiences of being a casual lecturer in FE. This chapter discusses my personal and professional interest in the research for my thesis, the professional and academic context of the research, and the identification and importance of the research problem. Definitions of the main terms and concepts used within the thesis are given, followed by the choice of theoretical framework, and the research design and methodology. Finally, the research methods, research questions and structure of the thesis are put forward, followed by a summary of the chapter.

1.2 Personal and Professional Interest

I first started lecturing in FE in 1993 when the beginning of the reforms (see 1.3) following the implementation of the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992* were being introduced. General Further Education Colleges (GFECs) had been taken from Local Education Authority (LEA) control, incorporated, and governed by independent non-elected boards (Shain and Gleeson, 1999). This prefaced the introduction of casual employment contracts (Parliament. House of Commons, 1998) and precipitated the removal of the national standard GFEC employment contract (the 'Silver Book'), replaced with new locally negotiated contracts. I was employed on a new contract, with lower pay, reduced holiday entitlement and increased teaching hours (Mather, Worral and Seifert, 2009). I was only paid for the hours I was employed to teach, with no marking or preparation time, no holiday pay, no training time, no maximum teaching hours, and the expectation that I would work for the same or more hours and accept the same or greater amount of work but not be paid with the same benefits and pay rates as my permanent colleagues. Strikes in FE were commonplace (Fletcher *et al*., 2015), morale was low (Elliott, 1996) but I loved the job, my students worked hard, most achieved, succeeded and progressed, and this provided me with a great deal of satisfaction. However, after two years I decided if I was going to commit so many hours to work then I would be recompensed properly – and, as a computing lecturer, I found it easy to move out of FE to become an information technology (IT) training consultant. My decision was not unusual. In the Select Committee on Education and

Employment Sixth Report (Parliament. House of Commons, 1998) Graham Moore, who became the Principal of the GFEC I had left, evidenced that lecturing staff, particularly computing lecturers, left the College for better remuneration. For me, it was employment on temporary contracts again, in the IT industry, but this time highly lucrative ones.

After several years of being a contractor my career had progressed into permanent business and project management roles, but I missed the people contact I had had as a lecturer and trainer. I retrained as a teacher and returned to FE. Yet again I was on badly paid, fixed-term, temporary, supply or zero-hours contracts, finding myself in precarious employment, an unwilling member of an expanding class, later termed the precariat (Standing, 2021) (see 2.1). To provide a living income for myself I accepted contracts from various FE settings, at one stage working for four further education colleges (FECs) and two agencies concurrently, teaching many different academic levels and subjects - some of which I was unfamiliar with. Juggling and balancing the demands of different FE settings, the form-filling, administration, lack of teaching materials, everchanging syllabi, performativity and lesson observations, department meetings and training for which I was often not paid, or had to fight to be paid for, began to take its toll. Again. I made the difficult decision to leave the teaching profession, this time completely. My experiences were not unique, resonating with other FE lecturers on insecure employments (O'Leary and Rami, 2017; UCU, 2019a; Fitzsimons, Henry and O'Neill, 2022), and in higher education (HE) (UCU, 2019b; Leathwood and Read, 2020).

But I missed teaching – by January 2020 I was back in FE, lecturing, again on zero-hours contracts. March 23rd, 2020 - the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic (WHO, 2022) lockdown began. I was paid at the end of April for the work I had done in March, then for May whilst I worked from home. June 26th, 2020 - I was told I was finished for the summer. Being on a permanent zero-hours contract meant I had no access to government help or unemployment benefits, and after July 2020 I received no income for three months. Towards the end of September 2020, I was given a few lecturing hours, and as I was paid a full month in arrears, at the end of October I received a very low pay packet. Suddenly, devastatingly, within one week, due to the lack of students, one of my FE contracts ended leaving me feeling very worried and vulnerable again, having already used all of my savings to support myself in the pandemic, an experience echoed in a study of casual Irish FE lecturers by Fitzsimons, Henry and O'Neill (2022). However, soon after, I applied for, and gained, a permanent contract with the FEC.

On the offer and acceptance of the permanent contract I was overwhelmed by the emotions I felt; vast relief, happy to be financially secure, included in the team, grateful that I did not have to send out more CVs, chase more contracts, work for different providers. Contrastingly, I was incandescently angry that I had been in a position where I felt so insecure, desperate and financially worried, that my qualifications, and years of experience as a lecturer had not been rewarded, to have felt like an outsider excluded, to not receive the benefits that my permanent colleagues enjoyed. Reflecting upon these unfamiliar, uncomfortable and strange reactions firmed my research interest; I had been interested in researching the working lives of lecturers and managers in FE, but my path had led me to investigate this through the lens of how casual employment (referred to in the thesis as casualisation) influenced their working lives and relationships.

1.3 Professional context of the research

Neoliberal, new public management (NPM) (see 2.3) (Hood, 1991) processes were introduced in the UK public services and those in other Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries in the 1980s. NPM is a generic term used to describe the implementation of business approach reforms in the public sector with the intention of increasing global competition by changing national economies, raising standards and reducing costs. Public assets were privatised, the Public Sector reduced, and the internal market introduced. Performance-related pay and performance management were also introduced to manage and reduce budgets and budget deficits (Bovaird and Löffler, 2003). This led to the rise of the precariat (see 2.1), a hierarchical class-based structure defined by Standing (2008; 2014; 2016; 2018; 2021; 2023).

NPM heavily influenced the FE sector, altering its landscape from the late 1980s to the early 1990s onwards. The *Education Reform Act 1988* and the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992* transferred the control of FE funding to the Further Education Funding Council for England (FEFC) from the LEAs, with the intention of reducing costs, raising standards and improving the quality of education for 16-19+ and adults. The introduction of new employment contracts encouraged the growth of casualisation, and the introduction of performance management, observations and appraisals increased management control over FE lecturers and their workload (Shain and Gleeson, 1999). The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) was appointed as the inspection body under *The Learning and Skills Act 2000*, leading to increased workload and stress, with mock inspections to prepare, and additional administration to produce the perceived

needed data on learner achievement and progress (Burnell, 2017). FE has also been inundated with a plethora of Acts and initiatives, white and green papers, reviews, reports and departmental reorganisations which has led to constant policy change, accompanied by frequent churn in FE ministers (Panchamia, 2012; Norris and Adams, 2017; FETL, 2021) (see 2.3).

Funding for FE has been cut in real terms over a long period of time. The latest Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) annual report on education spending in England for 2024/2025 details spending on adult skills being 40% less than in 2009-2010 and 16-19 funding for GFECs 11% less than 2010–2011 (Drayton *et al*., 2025). *The Augur Review* (2019) found the annual funding for FECs led to recruitment difficulties and instability. FE lecturer' pay is low (see 2.4). UK Government figures for 2022/2023 (DfE, 2024) show 21% of the publicly funded FE lecturer workforce in England were employed casually.

1.4 Defining the research 'problem'

The English government introduced The *Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022* reforming FE and HE to address the skills challenges, partly due to Brexit, and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (OECD, 2021) causing shortages in health and social care, hospitality and construction (Hobbs, 2021). There was a projected shortfall of four million skilled workers by 2024 (UK POST, 2021) and 25 million adults needed retraining (CBI, 2020). The T-Level and the adult loan entitlement were introduced (UK Government, 2021), which could increase the FE student population. Alongside the additional demands placed on FE there was a 17% projected rise in the English 16-18 year old population by 2024 increasing FE student numbers by approximately 160,000 (Sibieta and Tahir, 2022). Conversely, there is a 4.7% vacancy rate for FE lecturers (DfE, 2024), 25% of GFEC lecturers had left within one year, and 50% had left within three years (Farquhason *et al*., 2023), and in Six form Colleges (SFCs) one quarter of lecturers and one fifth of managers intended to leave (IFF Research, 2020). This makes implementation of the English Government's reforms and policy difficult to achieve.

Although casualisation in FE could be a factor in recruitment and retention little research has been performed in this field. In 2009, Jephcote and Salisbury (2009) were discussing the limited research into the working lives of FE Lecturers and more recent literature purports there is still limited research into FE lecturers working lives and less investigating job satisfaction levels (Odejimi and Ekpenyong, 2019; O'Neill and Fitzsimons, 2020; Fitzsimons, Henry and O'Neill, 2022). There is an increasing body of literature examining

the effects of casualisation in HE (Lopes and Dewan, 2014; Loveday, 2018a; 2018b; Leathwood and Read, 2020; Mason and Megoran, 2021), yet in FE there is even less research into the effects of casualisation than into FE lecturers' working lives with articles by O'Leary and Rami (2017), UCU (2019a), Fitzsimons, Henry and O'Neill (2022) and Tully (2023) discussing recruitment and retention issues in FE, and Gadsby and Smith (2023) investigating the mental health of FE lecturers. There appears to be even less literature pertaining to the experiences of academic managers employing FE lecturers on casual contracts although Runge, Hudson-Sharp and Rolfe (2017) investigated school managers' perceptions of employing agency teachers, Hanley and Orr (2019) discuss employing agency lecturers, Archer, Pajo and Lee (2013) explored the relationship New Zealand casual workers had with their managers, and Ryan, Connell and Burgess (2017) studied Australian university academic managers relationships with their lecturers.

1.5 The Importance of conducting this research

To increase FE lecturer recruitment and to help to stem the loss of FE lecturers, and to aid FE students to achieve their goals, it necessary to understand the factors that lead to FE lecturer dissatisfaction and attrition. This research investigates the role casualisation plays in academic manager and lecturer working lives, relationships and career choices within the FE sector, and add to the apparent limited body of research. FE lecturer casualisation causes significant challenges to the lecturers, to the managers in staffing allocation, and to the students in potential disruption to learning, and could therefore lead to student dissatisfaction leading to student attrition and loss of funding, limiting the future capabilities and choices for 16-19s and adults. Implications to the economy are worrying when the student body is discontent and does not succeed in achieving the skills needed to drive growth. The research also examines and puts forward suggestions as to what actions can be taken to minimise this. From a social justice viewpoint, it is important to understand the effects of casualisation on lecturers, and the associated effects upon their work colleagues, and the student body. However, with over a fifth of the FE lecturing workforce on casual contracts and a vacancy rate of almost 5% (DfE, 2024), it is also important from an economic viewpoint to investigate this under-researched area of FE.

1.6 Definition of key terms and concepts used in the thesis

1.6.1 FE casual contract types in FE used in the research

The terms used in this thesis for FE casual contract types are fixed-term, variable-hours, zero-hours, agency/supply (UK Government, 2022a), permanent variable-hours Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) with minimum guaranteed hours (UCU, 2020), and term-time only variable-hours (UK Government, 2022b) (also see 4.3). Detailed definitions are in appendix 1.

Casualisation, and casual are used as a group term to describe the flexible contract types used in FE. In the literature critical of casualisation the terms precarity and precarious are often utilised (Loveday, 2018a; Walsh, 2019; Mason and Megoran, 2021; Ball, 2021). This implies casual work is viewed negatively and the term precarity carries emotive connotations. As the research intends to examine all perspectives it was deemed that "casual", "casualised" and "casualisation" when discussing non-permanent employment contracts would be less judgemental.

1.6.2 Definition of further education, providers and qualification levels

The UK Government defines FE as post-16 education that is not HE (UK Government, 2023a), although HE is also delivered in FE by FE lecturers (ETF, 2017; Augur, 2019). FECs include GFECs which offer a wider range of courses for post-16 and adults, sixth form colleges (SFCs), private sector public funded (PSPF) - privately run FE providers (for profit) for post-14+, and other public funded providers (OPFP) which includes LA provision, community groups, some HE, University technical colleges, and 16-19 free schools (DfE, 2024). These, and FE qualification levels are specified in appendix 2.

1.7 Choice of theoretical framework

The theoretical framework is tripartite, based in organisational power theories (Mechanic, 1962; Salancik and Pfeffer, 1977), and the social theory of the precariat - progressives (Standing, 2014) embounded by Foucauldian philosophies of power (1982; 2019). Foucault's ideas of power have been used by many researchers (Ball, 2019; Allan, 2022), and these, married with Standing's Progressive class theory (2014), and the dependent organisation theory of Salancik and Pfeffer (1977) and Mechanic's (1962) dependent relationships in organisations theory provided a firm basis of theoretical investigation and discussion of the findings (see 2.9).

1.8 Research Design and Methodology

The underpinning philosophy of the research design was interpretive constructivism, with narrative research and autoethnography, using semi-structured interviews for data collection and thematic analysis (TA) for data analysis. A new approach to themes was developed, using idioms (see 3.15).

Ten participants: five managers representing the FE managerial hierarchy, and five lecturers (including myself) were interviewed, recruited from across England from a variety of publicly funded FE settings. None of the lecturers were employed by the managers (see 3.9). Personally, engaging in a participatory interview enabled a spontaneous retelling of my experiences (see 3.13).

My final choice of research design was aided by my educational and career experiences. My first degree was in English; my masters was in IT - examining visual representations of hierarchical data, and I have a PGCE. I have been an IT consultant, a senior manager, a computing lecturer, and an English literature and language lecturer. Qualitative narrative research relies upon the representation and interpretation of the stories sourced from the participants (Clandinin and Caine, 2008); autoethnography and the effective telling of the researcher's stories necessitates good narrative and authoring skills (Anderson, 2006; Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011) to portray evocative and engaging representations. TA is reliant upon the researcher's ability to systematically analyse, examine and determine themes within the stories of the participants (Joffe, 2011). I feel my educational and career background enabled me to authentically and evocatively represent the stories of myself and my participants, analyse the data, develop the themes, and present them in an accomplished manner.

1.9 The Research aims and objectives

1.9.1 Research aim

The aim of this research was to critically interrogate the perceptions and experiences of FE academic managers and FE casual lecturers of the policy of casualisation in publicly funded English FECs and its effects upon their working lives and relationships. The research objectives and questions have been formulated to address the gaps within the literature (see 1.4).

1.9.2 Research objectives

- To investigate the experiences of the policy of casualisation from academic managers and lecturers in English further education.
- To ascertain the perceptions and experiences of casualisation upon academic managers and lecturers' working lives and relationships.

1.9.3 Research questions

RQ1 - How is the policy of casualised employment experienced by academic managers and lecturers in English further education?

RQ2 - What are FE academic managers' perceptions and experiences of the effects of casualisation upon their FE working lives and relationships?

RQ3 - What are FE casual lecturers' perceptions and experiences of the effects of casualisation upon their FE working lives and relationships?

1.10 Structure of the Thesis

The structure follows a traditional thesis format of sequential and separate chapters. Chapter 2 reviews the literature pertaining to casualisation, FE managers and lecturers working lives, and presents and explains the theoretical framework. Chapter 3 discusses the research design and methodological approaches. Chapter 4 details the analysis and findings from the interviews placing them into idiom themes, and Chapter 5 is the discussion, where the research questions are examined in the light of the literature and the findings, the idiom themes and the superordinate themes through the lens of the theoretical framework. Finally, Chapter 6 draws conclusions to the research, providing the contribution to knowledge and offering recommendations for professional practice and further research, and concludes with a reflection of my professional doctoral journey.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

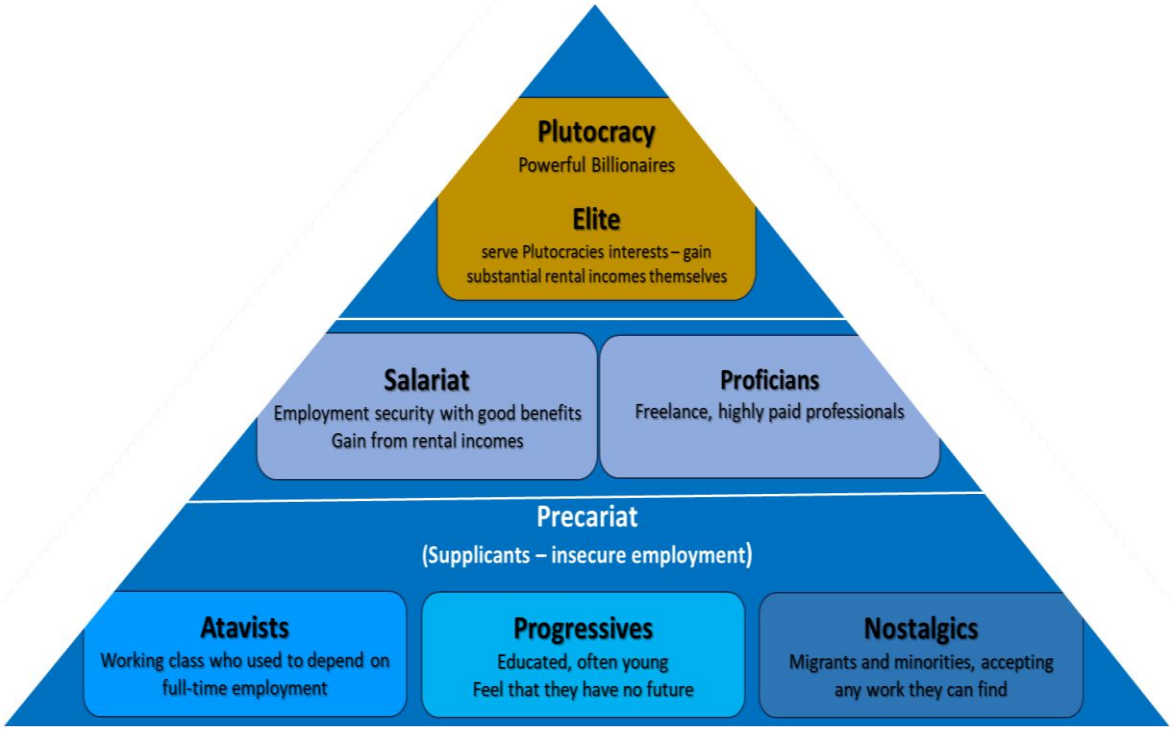
The chapter begins with a discussion of the rise of the precariat (Standing, 2011) and casual work, followed by an investigation of how the changing FE policies, influenced by the adoption of the NPM agenda from 1990 under successive UK Governments, have affected the working lives of FE managers and lecturers. FE pay, lecturer attrition and retention, and the use of casual contracts within FE are considered and the potential reasons for FE's perceived lower status in the education sector is briefly examined. Following this a review of the gap in the literature is undertaken. Finally, the theoretical framework combining Foucauldian theories with the precariat and theories pertaining to power within organisations is introduced. Appendix 3 provides an overview of the methods used to identify the literature reviewed within this thesis.

2.2 The precariat and the increase of casual work

Pierre Bourdieu is often credited with the primary use of "precarious" to describe insecure employment in his observations of the escalation of casual working conditions of the French ruled Algerian population in 1963 (Millar, 2017; Walsh, 2019). Standing (2011) used the term precariat to describe his theory of the emergence of a novel political class which is determined by casual employment and limited security of employment rights. Standing (2011) discussed how the precariat arose from the implementation of neoliberal globalisation policies leading to the desire for a more flexible labour market, where the risks were moved from the corporation and employer to the worker, causing insecurity and instability (see 2.3). Standing (2018) refined his theory, defining a global, hierarchical class structure (see Figure 2.1). Less than 1% of the population sit within the top echelon, the plutocracy, consisting of a few billionaires and a limited number of elites who look after their interests. Their income is generated from ownership of property, corporations, stocks and shares. Below this group are the salariat, a declining permanent workforce who receive excellent in-work benefits - the grouping where FE managers are potentially located, and the proficians - freelancers who are in highly paid contracts, for example, IT specialists and legal professionals. The lowest group is the precariat (supplicants), a dangerous class, banding together to demand better rights, consisting of three distinct groupings in casual employments: the atavists, the former working class, not well educated but who traditionally had permanent employment; and the nostalgics, migrant and minority

workers who do not feel they belong to the society in which they live and take any work they can obtain. The last grouping, the progressives, are well-educated, generally having engaged in HE through the encouragement of parents or teachers and told higher qualifications would lead to a better life for themselves. The progressives wish for a better society, often encumbered with student debt, and better educated than their work demands, or in work commensurate with their qualifications, but unable to achieve permanent employment – this is the category where arguably, the casual FE lecturer is positioned. Standing (2021) believes the precariat's work insecurity leads to a lack of status and identity and creates anxiety and mental stress, and that this was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 2.1 – Illustration of Standing's global class structure (Standing, 2021)



Johannesen (2019) states the precariat groupings share a commonality of anger and bitterness, despair and frustration at the echelons above them, desperately seeking employment permanence whilst not being able to financially support themselves. However, the precarity model is not universally accepted. Choonara (2020) disputes there has been a rise in casual employment within England, his analysis of "steady-state duration of a job in 2015" (Choonara, 2020, p. 15) found this was approximately of 16 years' duration for a permanent worker, and stability of employment and job duration in the UK has been constant with small-scale use of casual employment, with employers reliant upon employee retention. Conversely, the recent government FE Workforce Data Collection

(FEWDC) 2022/2023 (DfE, 2024) showed that one fifth, a significant percentage, of the FE lecturer workforce were employed casually (see 2.4). *The Taylor Review* (2017, p. 7) examining the UK labour market and what makes "Good work" discuss their main finding that flexibility is positive for many employees, and for the UK economy, although it acknowledges a power imbalance when the employee cannot choose their work but deemed that this generally affected low-skilled workers. Breman (2013), in a reply to Standing's book, *The precariat: The new dangerous class* (2011), whilst not disputing the rise of casual employment globally, contends the precariat model is not global and solely applies to OECD countries. Instead of three groupings of dangerous classes, potentially threatening the political elite, Breman (2013) suggests casualisation, diminution of union power, and reduction of pay, benefits and employment protection has weakened the ability of the casualised workforce to take action. Alberti *et al*. (2018) assert Standing's precariat class is composed of too broad a range of employees globally and they recommend the adoption of a more nuanced approach as to how and why casualisation has increased. They propose studying how neoliberalism and capitalism has exposed traditionally secure management and professional roles (which could pertain to FE lecturers) to precarious and casual employment. Millar (2017) purports Standing's branding of the precariat casual workforce as dangerous is derogatory and untrue. This view is also seen in Manolchev, Saundry and Lewis's (2021) investigation of 77 workers, who would be classed as precariat-nostalgics, from agriculture, care and construction, in casual, zero-hours, low paid employment in England. Examining Standing's (2021) theory of a dangerous class they studied the cohesiveness of the casual workers to ascertain whether they demonstrated the ability to coalesce into a political force. They concluded they did not, as the participants expressed individual differences in political attitudes, and a mix of positive and negative attitudes towards casualisation. The wide array of views and reactions within the literature demonstrates the provocation caused by the precariat (Standing, 2021) as a global class structure

2.3 Effects of FE policy changes, performativity, and managerialism, since 1990

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw the implementation of neoliberal, NPM (Hood, 1991) policies within many OECD countries, intended to develop and change national economies to increase global competitiveness by decreasing the public estate, reducing costs and raising standards. In understanding neoliberalism, it is important to comprehend what existed between its rise and the ending of the second world war. George (1999) purports

post-war society had moved towards a progressive agenda and, prior to neoliberalism, the idea of the market dictating politics, social engineering, the economy, employment relations, and the removal of controls on corporations was incomprehensible. In agreement, Harvey (2007) posits the USA and Europe developed state directed economies, pursuing policies of full employment, social welfare including education and healthcare systems, and intervening in industry. However, the late 1970's saw a change in economic policy in the UK, the USA and in many other parts of the world, following a decade of economic difficulties including the oil crisis leading to inflationary pressures, trade union strikes, rising unemployment, stagflation and the diminution of manufacturing (Macalister, 2011) discussed by Peck and Tickell (2007) as marking the perceived failures of the post-war economic policies to restrain the consequences of the crises. Harvey (2006) argues these crises created not only an economic threat but also a political threat of a rising tide of socialism and communism to the political and economic ruling elite who, after the second world war, had seen their influence wane, and this led to neoliberalisation. Harvey (2006) additionally proposes neoliberalism was initially a theory which enabled societal health and well-being through entrepreneurism, property ownership and rights and market freedom with the state's role to ensure the stability of money, and police and defend the free market and property rights. Equally, Peck and Tickell (2007) deliberate upon neoliberalism being a philosophy of politics and economics in which the market permeates and controls all "governance, rule and control across … all speres of social life" (Peck and Tickell, 2007, p. 27), and Venugopal (2015) describes neoliberalism as a contested term, beginning as an economic theory and becoming a political and economic ideology which promulgated privatisation, de-regulation of the markets, the reduction in the welfare state and the promotion of capitalism. Standing (2011) states neoliberalism saw the market as key to economic growth, and central to this was the optimisation of competitiveness disseminated through all aspects of society.

Elected in 1979 Margaret Thatcher, the Conservative Prime Minister, introduced neoliberal policies into the UK. Utilising neoliberal ideology markets were deregulated including banking, foreign investment was encouraged, and trade union power and the power of professional institutions and associations were confronted to disencumber the market from perceived non-competitive employment rights and practices (Harvey, 2006). Standing (2011) deliberates neoliberalism transferred the risks of the market from the employer to the employee, with the reduction of workers' rights and the introduction of casualisation. This permeated throughout the public sector where NPM was introduced. Designed to

control budget deficits and limit the state the public sector was reformed by decentralisation, privatisation and contracting out, competition and internal market introduction, performance management and performance-related pay, reduction of standardised pay agreements and introduction of local pay arrangements (Bovaird and Löffler, 2003). The move towards NPM brought managerialism and marketisation into the UK (Forrester and Garrett, 2016), and into the FE sector.

2.3.1 FE policy – Conservative Government 1980s - 1997

The *Education Reform Act 1988* and the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992* introduced neoliberalistic ideas bringing marketisation into FE in England by incorporation, granting self-governing status to GFECs with the intention of allowing competition and improvement of managerial practices (Randle and Brady, 1996), and changes to FE funding to create more accountability and increase quality of provision (Illsley and Waller, 2017). Employment conditions for lecturers changed, with lower pay, less benefits, higher teaching hours, and an expansion of casual FE lecturer employment. The reforms also increased managerial control over FE lecturers' work (Shain and Gleeson, 1999), lecturer appraisal, performance management and observations (Robson, 1998). New vocational qualifications were introduced (Elliott, 1996) and more government funding was allocated to private PSPFs which also increased from the 1980s onwards (Simmons, 2024).

Bradley (1996) discusses prior to incorporation FE was funded from the LEAs, decided against the submission of plans from the FE colleges which based the funding on projected full-time equivalent student numbers. The funding allocation was dependent upon the course type and qualification level, and considered student type, for example special needs students attracted more funding. It was in the control of the LEA with no national formula, formulated from historical funding provision and localisation (Bradley, 1996) and was not dependent upon student achievement (Illsley and Waller, 2017). After incorporation English FE funding was transferred from the LEAs to the FEFC, and local Training and Enterprise Councils, bodies mostly controlled by government allowing government to dictate funding policy (Randle and Brady, 1996). The FEFC's remit also included inspection. These changes were designed to enable greater efficiency, increase marketisation and competition but conversely removed control from the incorporated FECs to direction by government (Shain and Gleeson, 1999). Panchamia (2012) describes how, although the funding was weighted differently for each body, the funding formulas were awarded against output and achievement. Funding changed from block grants awarded annually in

advance to FECs in consideration of projected student numbers to a complicated formula for unit delivery, allocated against student enrolment numbers, teaching and learning time, and student success achievements, intended to introduce competitive practises between FECs, and improve education quality by enabling the self-governing colleges greater flexibility to competitively aim their offering to local needs. Funding could also be taken back or removed if targets for student retention and achievement were not met (Shain and Gleeson, 1999). However, Bradley (1996) deliberates the consequences of the new funding allocation system: colleges chose the students who would be most likely to achieve multiple qualifications, increasing achieved unit numbers therefore funding, and reducing the student body (and by implication the lecturer levels needed to deliver). For example, A level students would also be entered onto A level General Studies. In concurrence, *The Kennedy Report* (Kennedy, 1997) stated the funding formula encouraged the recruitment of students who were likely to achieve, diminishing the diversity of the student body. Although the funding changes had led to the growth in student and qualification achievement numbers students who needed more help also needed more time and teaching. According to Kennedy (1997) these students who traditionally benefitted from FE; working class, disaffected low achieving young students, ethnic minorities and women, were not a cost effective proposition to the colleges due to their difficulties in learning and achieving and additional time and lecturing hours they needed, potentially causing reduced funding. Prior to the change in funding formula students with additional needs could receive additional funding (Bradley, 1996) and therefore were able to access education. Panchamia (2012) also purports the funding formulas created negative incentives for education and for the FE students in gaining useful vocational qualifications hindering their employment opportunities. Concurring with Bradley (1996) and Kennedy (1997) she deliberates upon “unit farming” and “unit maximisation” (Panchamia, 2012, p. 3) where the FEC would enter students onto as many qualifications as possible within one course, and recruit students who would be capable of achieving multiple qualifications, again reducing the desire to recruit students who needed more help and were not as academically able. Extending upon the negative effects of this she also deliberates upon the types of courses offered which were often of low quality, particularly for employment, chosen as they were inexpensive to run and quick to deliver results. Thus, the neoliberal induced funding changes disbenefitted many of the students. Students for whom FE was a second chance, hindering their opportunities to succeed (Gadsby and Smith, 2023).

Neoliberalism extended its reach to the employment conditions of lecturers. Prior to incorporation the 'Silver Book' agreement was a national standard lecturers' employment contract (Fletcher *et al*., 2015) utilised throughout GFECs. Elliott (1996) argues FE management saw the 'Silver Book' agreement as having an unacceptable high salary, teaching hour limitations and benefits structure which was too rigid and placed power in the hands of the unions and the lecturers. The influence of government over the FEFC, and the colleges, and the governmental view of lecturers' pay and conditions was clearly shown when in 1993, the then Education Secretary, John Patten, in a written answer in the House of Commons on departmental expenditure stated:

> *I shall set as a condition of my grant to the FEFC that it requires the institutions it funds to take account of the principles set out in the Chancellor's statement, and in particular of the need to cover higher pay costs from within efficiency improvements, in 1994-95. I shall in addition hold back £50 million of grant from the FEFC, to be released when there has been satisfactory progress within colleges towards more flexible contracts of employment.* (Patten, 1993)

In the same answer he also discussed the targeted 25% increase in FE student numbers between 1992/93 and 1995/96 stating it was necessary to accommodate these by more efficiency savings as shown by the lack of correlation between this ambition and the projected funding rises of less than 7% in 1994/5 and less than 8% in 1995/6. To achieve these targets with a challenging funding regime, and the government's (and therefore the FEFC's) desire to change the working arrangements it was inevitable pay and conditions would be eroded, and the rise in casualisation appears inevitable. For permanent lecturers the "Silver Book" contract was replaced with new locally negotiated contracts with less favourable terms. SFCs, however, retained a national agreement (Parliament. House of Commons, 1998). Mather, Worrall and Seifert (2009) found the new GFEC contract allowed FE management to reduce pay, and terms and conditions, increase teaching hours, reduce the power of the unions and the lecturers, and employ lecturers on temporary and part-time contracts. They demonstrated the differences of workload expectations between the 'Silver Book' contract and the new contracts in three GFECs which saw an annual increase in teaching hours of between forty to ninety plus hours and a decrease in holiday entitlement of twenty-five days. Equally, in a narrative inquiry study of the effects of the reforms on the working lives of lecturers in five GFECs, Shain and Gleeson (1999) found the new contract had decreased pay and holidays, and increased teaching hours exponentially. Gleeson, Davies and Wheeler (2005, p. 450) discuss the "long interview" where casual

contracts were utilised as an accepted route into FE lecturing. Lecturers were offered financial incentives to change to the new contract, and those who did not received a pay freeze, or, demonstrated in the case of Chippenham College (TES, 1995), were under threat of being dismissed if they did not sign the contract. Merrist Wood agricultural college dismissed six lecturers who refused to sign the new contracts and replaced them with lower paid instructors (TES, 1995). Lecturer strikes and industrial disputes over the new contracts created a segmented, discontented workforce, and morale amongst staff was low (Elliott, 1996; Robson, 1998). Redundancy was prevalent, with staff being re-employed on casual contracts which decreased the wage bill and increased managerial control of lecturers who were fearful of losing their employment (Shain and Gleeson, 1999). Marketisation increased the intensity of performance management, observations and the need to achieve targets by maximising student attendance and course completion, and the changes to the curriculum increased workload. Robson (1998) found increased managerialism, and the funding requirements for students to pass steered lecturers to feel that they could not fail students.

Despite the strikes and resistance to the removal of the Silver Book contract by 1998 the Education and Employment Select Committee (Parliament. House of Commons, 1998) stated 93% of the FE sector staff were employed on new contracts, and that the pressure of finances and government intervention via the FEFC had led to increases in part-time staff, reduction of student teaching hours and an increase in agency staff. 39% of lecturers were on casual contracts, student teaching hours had reduced and there was an increase in agency staff. Reporting to the same Select Committee (Parliament. House of Commons, 1998) the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) estimated in 1994-1995 42% of all FE lecturers who taught over 15 hours per week were employed casually, compared with 9% national casualisation average in all other employments. Additionally, the Committee expressed part-time staff did not have the same opportunities as permanent staff for development, briefings, induction or involvement in pastoral support. The changes impacted retention and attrition; by 1998/1999 one third of lecturers were not lecturing after five years with the majority leaving within two years, a trend which continued and grew throughout the New Labour Government (DfE, 2021).

2.3.2 FE policy - New Labour 1997 - 2010

In 1997 New Labour came to power under Prime Minister Tony Blair. There was an expectation the neoliberal agenda would change as in his 1996 Ruskin speech prior to winning the General Election Blair stated the market was not the factor in making a good school. He stated "Culture, attitude and expectations are critical to successful education, and they exist whether or not we have a market in education" (Blair, 1996). Yet as Ball (2021) contends under New Labour there was limited change, the new policies barely diverging from the outgoing Conservative government policies as New Labour embraced the "Third Way"[1] and modernisation[2]. He discusses how New Labour adopted many of the current conservative party policies, and how under the "Third Way" key performance indicators (KPIs) were introduced to control and monitor the success outcomes of financial funding. Under New Labour, as under the previous Conservative Government there were multiple policy initiatives and changes (FETL, 2021). In 1998 the Learning Age Strategy was presented in a Green Paper (DfEE, 1998) by the Education and Employment Secretary, David Blunkett. Based on the Kennedy Report, (Kennedy, 1997) (see 2.3.1) intended to help widen participation in education, the strategy introduced the University for Industry and plans for an additional 500,000 student places in FE and HE (FETL, 2021). Discussed by Wolstencroft and Darnell (2022) the strategy's plans for an additional 500,000 student places in FE and HE (FETL, 2021) increased the HE offering in FE, and with Tony Blair's desire for 50% of the population to attend HE (Blair, 1999) by implication this also increased the need for lecturers. On casualisation within FE it detailed the necessity to maintain a flexible lecturing workforce by achieving:

> *the right balance between full and part-time tutors and lecturers, so that colleges are flexible enough to cope with rapid change, but also have sufficient continuity to secure their objectives. (DfEE, 1998 p. 58).*

This demonstrated the acceptance and desire to perpetuate casualisation by balancing full-time staff to help with continuity but retaining the use of part-time, casual staff on an as and when basis. The strategy also indicated the perpetuation of FEFC funding, and the

[1] "The Third Way" was embraced in the 1990s by Tony Blair in the UK, and in many other OECD countries. The ideology combined centre-left and centre-right political thinking; promoting enterprise and a market economy, a smaller state and public services efficiency or privatisation, changes to social welfare programmes, individual responsibility, and economic growth to fund Government rather than tax revenues from the wealthiest (Blair and Schröder, 1998).

[2] Modernisation was a term introduced by Tony Blair's New Labour (Cabinet Office, 1999) to cover the "Third Way" reforms in policy and public services encompassing all Government departments.

setting and monitoring of annual targets on achievement and retention, the introduction of a training standards council and inspections for FE to improve teaching. All lecturers with sizeable teaching hours commitments would have to gain a recognised teaching qualification within two years. This became a statutory requirement under *The Further Education Teachers' Qualifications (England) Regulations, 2001* in which all lecturers had to either already hold a teaching qualification or gain one within a certain time frame dependent upon their employment duration and status. Gleeson, Davies and Wheeler (2005) advance this was viewed as helping to effectuate a return to the professionalisation of lecturers' pre-neoliberalism, although the casual nature of the employment of many FE lecturers, and the difficulties in recruitment and retention undermined its success. Prior to this Gleeson *et al.* (2015) purport lecturer professionalisation had generally been focussed upon vocational and industrial expertise, and qualifications gained prior to entry into FE by VET lecturers and mandating teaching qualifications sought to raise the quality of teaching standards for improved outcomes. This ambition was also seen in the framework for post-16 education (DfEE, 1999) which introduced the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The LSC became responsible for all FE post-16 training and education, with local LSCs to provide funding for training and education relevant to their local areas. The LSCs had sweeping authority over quality improvements in FECs and, in tandem with the reallocation of power, FECs were to be inspected by OFSTED for FE provision up to age 19. Ofsted inspections, introduced into FE following *The Learning and Skills Act, 2000* impacted lecturers' and managers' well-being. O'Leary (2006), considering the role of observations in improving teaching, discusses how the introduction of Ofsted to FE was premised upon the need to improve the quality of teaching, which implied teaching was of poor quality. He also details the negative perceptions by lecturers of the observation, the stress induced, and the potential and actual humiliations felt. Burnell (2017) investigated the effects that inspections by Ofsted had within FECs: to prepare for the inspections mock inspections, observations of teaching and learning (OTLs) were introduced by FE senior managers to raise the quality of teaching and standards prior to Ofsted, however, as Burnell (2017) discusses this added to the burden of stress upon lecturers and also added to their decisions on whether to stay in FE.

A discussion document for a new strategy *Success for all* (DfES, 2002) was launched which mentioned unacceptable high levels of casualisation in FE but did not address how this would be reduced. It also discussed FE pay, and the difficulties in recruitment and retention of FE lecturers. The gap between the pay of schoolteachers and FE lecturers had increased

to 12%, lecturers were striking, and there was a lecturer vacancy rate of 25% (Kingston, 2002). Casualisation was increasing; Marley, from NATFHE, cited in Curtis (2002), stated that in FE and HE 75% of new lecturers and 50% of current lecturers were on short-term contracts. *The Foster Report* (2005), investigating FE provision, commented upon FE college underperformance, the number of initiatives that FE had experienced and called for improvements and simplification of the inspection system. It also discussed the difficulties caused by casualisation, citing 17% of staff were on casual contracts which created a divided workforce and hindered staff development. The report recommended a strategy to review pay, and support recruitment and retention, and was also critical of leadership and management and it stated a requirement for leadership qualifications for new college principals (Foster, 2005). Responding to the report the Government published its proposals to reform FE in a White Paper (DfES, 2006). It detailed that individual learners would have individual targets and that achievements against these would be tracked and it stated it had already put in place the means to reduce the gap between FE lecturers' and schoolteachers' pay from 13% to 8%, yet it did not propose the implementation of a national pay scale quantifying the need to leave pay and benefit setting within the sector. Casualisation of staff was not referred to.

The paper led to *The Further Education Teachers' Qualifications (England) Regulations, 2007* which required all FE lecturers, from September 1st, 2007, to have or progress towards Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills status if they had not achieved Qualified Teacher Status. New awards were established with differing levels of certification: Awards in Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS); Certificates in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (CTTLS), and the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS) (LSIS, 2012). *The Further Education Teachers' Continuing Professional Development and Registration (England) Regulations, 2007* was also introduced which mandated a minimum of 30 hours continuing professional development (CPD) for full-time lecturers, with pro-rata for part-time, and the compulsory registration with the Institute for learning (IFL), previously a voluntary, professional institution for FE incorporated in 2002 (Fletcher et al., 2015). Part of the role of the IFL was to verify lecturers' qualifications (Goldhawk and Waller, 2023) and all lecturers had to provide the IFL with a yearly record of CPD. The Quality Improvement Agency (QIA), created in 2006, was introduced to implement a national quality improvement strategy, and it replaced the LSC, and other agencies which oversaw quality and development in FE (DfES, 2006). In 2008 the QIA merged with the Centre for Excellence in Leadership to become the Learning and Skills

Improvement Service (LSIS) to oversee and improve professionalism and quality of lecturers and managers. The intention of these various initiatives and institutions had again been to raise the professionalism and also the status of FE lecturers (Fletcher et al., 2015), however, Norris and Adams (2017) argue the constant change and reorganisation during this period, and in subsequent periods (see 2.3.3), diminished the success of the agencies, and therefore the professionalisation policies, citing the example of the LSC which was disbanded before it was scaled up. They purport a similar demise for the QIA which lasted for two years and its replacement the LSIS which was disbanded in 2013.

2.3.3 FE policy - Conservatives 2010 to 2024

In 2010 a coalition agreement between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats was formulated to create the Government, with the Conservatives holding majority power (UK Government, 2010). Neoliberal and marketisation policies in the education sector continued, with the progression of the weak state where privatisation was seen as good and public ownership was seen as undesirable (Bailey and Ball, 2016). In 2013 further centralisation and a new school curriculum moved education further towards traditional, neoconservative ideology, and new qualifications were introduced (Gov.uk, 2016).

The 2007 financial crisis had led to a global recession. To reduce the UK budget deficit a policy of austerity was introduced (Osbourne, 2010) to lower public spending by further privatisation, cutting budgets, increasing taxes and implementing a public pay freeze. For the FE sector this led to fierce funding reductions. *The Lingfield Review* (DBIS, 2012) found fear amongst lecturing staff, and commented upon the disparity of remuneration between FE, and schools and HE salaries. It deliberated upon how this had encouraged lecturers to seek teaching qualifications that would allow them to move into secondary education, causing further attrition. It further noted that in 2009/2010 of the 130,000 FE lecturers 51,000 were employed on casual contracts, 40% of the FE lecturer workforce; this, it concluded, could lead to a "comprehensive professional ethos" (Department for Business, 2012, p. 5) being compromised when permanent staffing levels fell below a certain level. The recommendations of the *Lingfield Review* (DBIS, 2012) removed the mandatory requirement for compulsory registration of the IFL which had become contentious following the Government's removal of funding for registration and the requirement for FE lecturers, who legally had to register with the IFL and were therefore mandated to pay their own fees (Lee, 2011), with the fee costs at £68, more than double the original £30 (UCU, 2011). The review (DBIS, 2012) also removed the requirement for lecturers to hold QTLS or

other teaching qualifications stating professionalism had been undermined by the pressures of government and other agency requirements (Fletcher et al., 2015). This led to professional development returning to the control of individual GFEC organisations and leadership (Goldhawk and Waller, 2023), and the instigation of additional reviews of teacher professional standards (Smith and O'Leary, 2013).

By 2018 FE funding for adults was 45% lower than in 2009 (Belfield, Farquharson and Sibieta, 2018), and the decline in funding per student continued from 2013 to 2019 (Sibieta and Tahir, 2021). A narrative inquiry study by O'Leary and Rami (2017), who conducted semi-structured interviews of 19 FE lecturers, managers and support staff into the effects of austerity, stated spending had been cut by 27% between 2011 to 2016 and the funding cuts increased lecturer casualisation with management needing to reduce spending by offering fixed-term term-time-only contracts. They also considered how the funding cuts contributed to lecturer employment uncertainty as FE College area reviews led to redundancies, and changes in lecturer roles increasing responsibilities, teaching and administration. The need to retain students and therefore funding also led to lecturers feeling pressured to ensure student achievement (Illsley and Waller, 2017), a trend continuing from the start of FE marketisation (Robson, 1998) (see 2.3.1). The pay freeze created real terms pay reduction, increasing the divergence between remuneration in FE to other education sectors, average lecturer pay was £7000 less than average teacher pay (UCU, 2019a).

In 2018 Theresa May, the Prime Minister (Conservative) commissioned a review of post 18 education appointing Dr Philip Augar. "The Augur Review" (2019) examined HE and FE adult provision and was critical of how FE was viewed within the education sector, and how it was funded, not merely in terms of funding for learning but also in terms of financial provision for capital funding. One of its conclusions was that the annual budget for FECs created instability and engendered staffing recruitment difficulties with a 3-5% vacancy rate (higher in VET subjects such as engineering) potentially due to the lower salary capacity against School, HE and industrial salary scales, and the desire of 42% of FE lecturers and 33% of FE leaders wishing to leave the sector. Succeeding Theresa May in June 2019, Boris Johnson became the next Conservative Prime Minister, In March 2020 an inquiry into Adult Skills and Lifelong Learning (ASALL) was launched and "A plan for an adult skills and lifelong learning revolution" was produced in December 2020 (Parliament. House of Commons, 2020). This led to The *Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022* provided the legislative

framework for the English Government's reforms for FE and brought in important changes in its governance and sweeping demands on the sector. There was a reversal of incorporation bringing GFECs, SFCs and other designated FE institutions back under central government control and into the public sector (DfE, 2022a). FECs were now unable to access private funding, commercial financing of debt, or have access to overdraft and credit facilities without DfE consent. FECs remained in charge of pay setting, although approval would be needed for bonuses above £17,500 and senior pay salaries above £150,000 (Lewis and Bolton, 2023). The policy was also designed to address the skills shortage challenges faced by the UK Government, exacerbated as the UK left the European Union, and the COVID-19 pandemic. These had adversely affected the hospitality, health and social care and the construction industries (Hobbs, 2021), with a forecasted shortfall of 4 million skilled workers by 2024 (UK POST, 2021) and the need to retrain 25 million adults (CBI, 2020). A national recruitment campaign to promote FE lecturing was proposed. In addition to this increase there was a projected 17% rise in 16-17 year olds seeking FE in England by 2024 which would grow the student population by an estimated 160,000 extra students. This trend would continue to rise to 1.5 million additional 16-17 year olds by 2029, and as 85% of 16-17 year olds were in full-time education this would increase the demands upon FE substantially (Sibieta and Tahir, 2022).

In September 2022 Liz Truss replaced Boris Johnson as the Conservative Government Prime Minster. The Truss administration's mini budget severely impacted the economy which was already struggling following the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine (Kutllovci, 2022). By October 2022 she was replaced by Rishi Sunak. In October 2023 he announced a consultation for further new qualification changes merging T-levels with A Levels to become the new Advanced British Standard (Prime Minister's Office, 2023) baccalaureate qualification, a rise of 15% teaching time for each student, additional maths and English classes up to age 18, and a tax-free bonus up to £30,000 over the first five years for a newly employed shortage-subject lecturer. However, in a briefing paper detailing the reaction to this policy by both Unions and FE senior management worry was expressed the bonus would only be accessed by a few teachers, the increase in teaching hours would financially impact FECs who were already facing financial difficulties, and did not address retention of current lecturers (Lewis and Bolton, 2024). The Education and Skills Funding Agency stated that the financial health of 64% of FECs was less than good. In the annual report reviewing education spending in England it was estimated that funding per student in GFECs would be £7,100, in SFCs £5,400 and in school SFCs £5,800, and even with the additional £1.6

billion announced for 2024-2025 for FECs this would still see a 10% reduction in funding for GFECs (Drayton *et al*., 2023). The data for the academic year 2022/2023 confirmed the downward trend for English college funding (Moura and Tahir, 2024), and the latest IFS annual report on education spending in England for 2024/2025 detailed spending on adult skills being 40% less than in 2009/2010, and 16-19 funding for GFECs 11% less, and school SFCs 23% less per student than 2010/2011 (Drayton *et al*., 2025). In July 2024 the Labour Government achieved power, with Sir Keir Starmer becoming Prime Minister.

There have been multiple UK Governments in office and, with the intention of reducing costs, raising standards and improving the quality of education for 16-19+ and adults, FE has been inundated with a plethora of Acts and initiatives, white and green papers, reviews, reports and departmental reorganisations. This has led to constant policy change, accompanied by frequent churn in FE ministers and senior civil servants within the FE sector (Panchamia, 2012; Norris and Adams, 2017; FETL, 2021). Norris and Adam (2017) identified over 30 years, up to 2017, there had been 48 Secretaries of State with responsibility for FE, and 28 pieces of legislation, and this has increased since 2017 to 2024 with five Prime Ministers (UK Government, 2024), and several government re-shuffles. There has been a frequent churn of Prime Ministers and Cabinets, and FE policy has again continually changed. This has left the FE sector unstable with the need to continually re-define itself (FETL, 2021).

2.4 Vacancy rates, and FE lecturers' and managers' pay

Implementation of the Government's policies requires a stable, and growing FE lecturer workforce yet the Government's FEWDC analysis for the academic year 2022/2023 (DfE, 2024) shows a 4.7% vacancy rate for lecturers in FE, and a 2.2% vacancy rate for managers. In contrast, the school workforce data for the reporting year 2022/2023 (DfE, 2023a) shows the vacancy rate for teachers was 0.5%.

The 2022/2023 FEWDC (DfE, 2024) statistics help to demonstrate the disparity between the pay of lecturers, managers and leaders within different provider types in the FE sector. Collated from the published data (DfE, 2024) Table 2.1 shows the FTE minimum median, maximum median, and average median pay in FE for the year 2022/2023 (the relevant pay scales at the time of the participant interviews). The data were collated from the FEWDC pay table, based on age group (excluding totals) and region. The SFC pay framework is generally equivalent to the schoolteacher pay scale (NEU, 2024). For FE lecturers the lowest minimum median ranged from £24,000 in PSPF to £31,423 in SFC. For lecturers the SFC

minimum median pay was £5,266 higher than GFEC, £6,107 higher than OPFP and £7,423 higher than PSPF. The maximum median pay difference (excluding London) between SFC, and the other providers ranged from £14,637 (PSPF), £9,213 (GFEC) and a smaller differential of £2,856 (OPFP). When considering the FE average median pay for lecturers (including London), again, SFC lecturers were paid almost £10,000, 22% more than GFEC to over £14,268, 32% more than PSPF.

Table 2.1 –FE FTE median pay by role type and sector 2022/2023 (DfE, 2024)

Main Role Type	Provider type	Min of median pay	Max of median pay (exc London)	Average median pay (inc London)
Lecturer	GFEC	£26,157	£37,920	£34,576
	OPFP	£25,316	£44,277	£36,660
	PSPF	£24,000	£32,496	£29,988
	SFC	£31,423	£47,133	£44,256
Manager	GFEC	£33,302	£44,428	£42,145
	OPFP	£34,723	£47,174	£42,454
	PSPF	£30,800	£42,593	£39,330
	SFC	£41,203	£55,116	£48,275
Leader	GFEC	£46,657	£92,790	£66,278
	OPFP	£54,004	£65,602	£59,086
	PSPF	£41,432	£63,037	£55,000
	SFC	£60,467	£80,148	£71,395

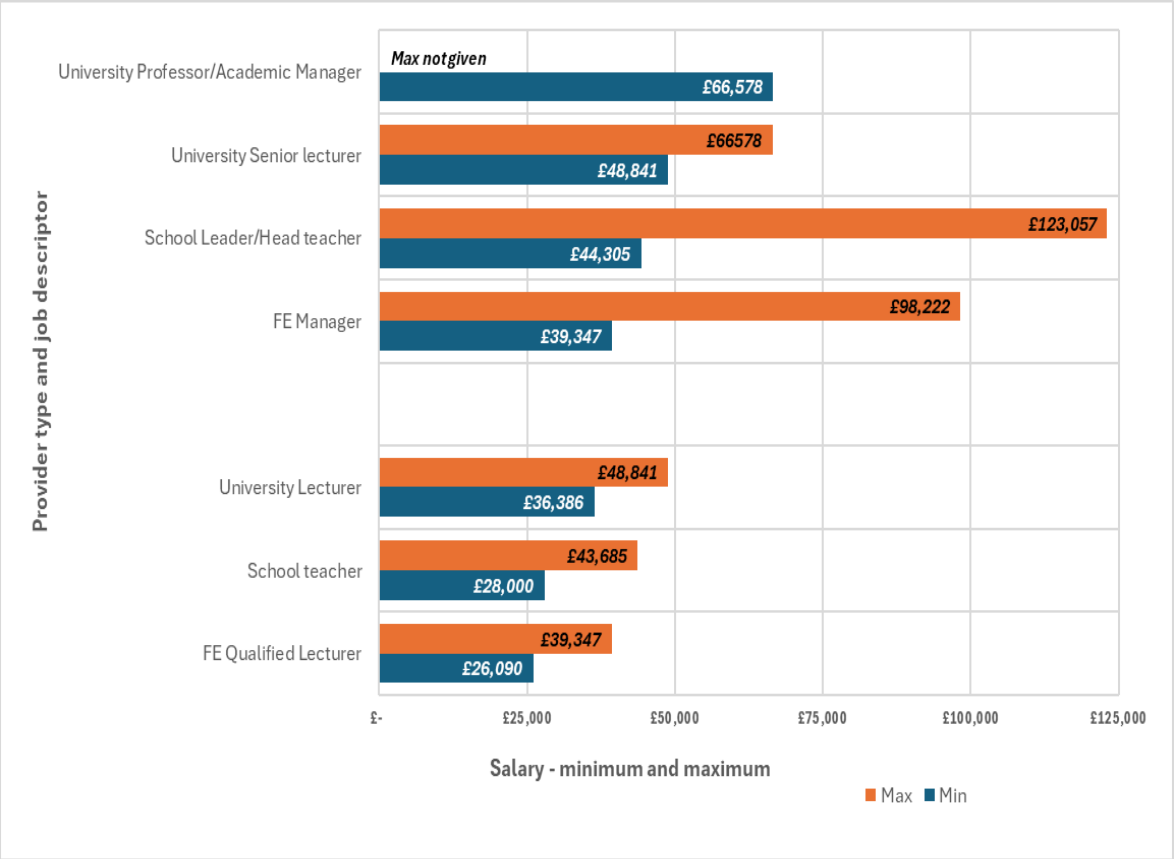
When comparing the pay differentials for managers and leaders between the FE provider types the same theme prevails. Apart from the maximum median pay for GFEC Leaders, SFC managers and leaders are paid between 7% to 23% higher than their counterparts in other FE provider types.

There are no published median salary figures for HE pay. However, The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) publish mandatory academic university staff pay data grouped into six salary bandings based upon the HE single pay spine (UCU, 2023a). Figure 2.2 uses the HESA upper three bandings from the HESA 2022/2023 academic staff data (HESA, 2024) to correlate with the FE lecturer and FE manager salary scales (as recommended by the AoC) (UCU, 2023b). The HESA data are mapped to the HE single pay spine (UCU, 2023a), and also correlated with the teacher (lowest main pay scale to highest upper pay scale), leader and headteacher, bandings from the DfE's Schools Workforce in England (SWE) pay data (DfE, 2022b).

As is demonstrated in Figure 2.2 an FE qualified lecturer would start on approximately £10,000 lower than an HE lecturer, and £2,000 lower than a schoolteacher. There is also a deficit of almost £9,500 maximum salary for an FE teacher in comparison with an HE

lecturer, and nearly £4,500 deficit with the maximum salary for a schoolteacher. The same disparities are echoed in the starting salary of FE managers, and school leaders and HE leaders with almost £5,000 less than school leaders and almost £10,000 less than HE leaders.

Figure 2.2 – Comparison of FE, HE and school academic pay 2022/2023 (DfE, 2024; UCU, 2023a; HESA, 2024)



In the 2022/2023 FEWDC only salary data for permanent or fixed-term contracts were collected. Pay data for casual academic staff were not collected as the methodology stated the data collection process did not enable an accurate estimate of a yearly salary for casual contract types (DfE, 2024). To estimate the hourly pay for a zero-hours GFEC lecturer the calculations have been based on a 42-week working year, with 24 hours teaching expected per week using the minimum median salary from 2022/2023 FEWDC (see Table 2.1). Using this calculation the hourly rate would be £26.00

With calculations based on the UCU calculation of hourly pay rates for academic staff (pre-1992 sector) in HE (UCU, 2021), in the year 2022/2023 an HE casual hourly-paid lecturer would earn approximately £52.62 p/h (including a 15% uplift for holiday pay) for each teaching hour. Calculations are based on HE pay spine point 30 £35,333 (UCU, 2023a), a working week of 37 hours - a basic rate of £18.30 multiplied by a 2.5 uplift for

administrative duties, marking and preparation. The HE hourly rate is double the hourly rate given in the GFEC example.

Table 2.2 – FE job advertisements (FEjobs, 2023)

Town	Lecturing position	Job type	Starting rate	Highest rate
Pool	Childcare	Zero-hours	£14.13	£14.13
Warrington	Electrical	Zero-hours	£18.15	£20.44
Newcastle under Lyme	Lecturer in A Level Maths	Zero-hours	£22.14	£22.14
Newham	ESOL	Zero-hours	£23.00	£24.65
Durham	ESOL	Zero-hours	£25.19	£25.19
Durham	Early years	Zero-hours	£26.55	£33.64
St Albans	Animation	Zero-hours	£26.76	£40.48
Neath	Sport	Variable, fixed-term	£22,904.00	£41,915.00
Skipton	Public services and Sports	Permanent	£23,565.00	£33,529.00
Dudley	Plumbing and Gas	Permanent F/T	£24,440.00	£41,371.00
Coventry	Motor Vehicle	Permanent F/T	£24,861.00	£36,524.00
Newcastle under Lyme	A Level Psychology	FT/PT	£25,360.00	£35,990.00
Leamington Spa	Plumbing	Permanent F/T	£25,740.00	£25,986.00
Peterborough	Basic Skills Maths	Permanent F/T	£25,934.00	£32,741.00
Leamington Spa	Electrical	Permanent	£25,986.00	£32,014.00
Penkridge	Games Production	Permanent FTE	£26,479.00	£39,150.00
Melton Mowbray	Motor Vehicle	Permanent F/T	£27,707.00	£36,172.00
Uxbridge	Motor Vehicle	Permanent F/T/ P/T	£29,443.00	£41,060.00
Ealing	Business	Permanent F/T	£29,860.00	£42,284.00

Other examples of hourly rates and contracts for FE are shown in Table 2.2, taken from jobs advertised on FEjobs (2023) on 07/09/2023. These demonstrate the low salary rates in comparison with the average median salaries (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.3 - Casual lecturers in FE 2022/2023 (DfE, 2024)

Provider Type	Lecturing staff in each provider type Headcount	Percentage of Lecturers on casual contracts	No of Lecturer staff on casual contracts
GFEC	49,373	22%	10,665
SFC	4,625	12%	546
PSPF	18,456	8%	1,495
OPFP	9,474	46%	4,320
Total	**81,928**	**21%**	**17,041**

Table 2.3 shows the percentage of lecturing staff in 2022/2023 on casual contracts; 21% of the overall lecturer workforce. This equates to 17,000 lecturers (by headcount, not FTE) casually employed in FE overall (DfE, 2024).

2.5 FE recruitment and attrition

The differences in pay between schools and HE, and between FE sectors and casualisation has been illustrated (see 2.4) and research suggests this current situation adds to worsening retention in FE. Farquhason *et al*. (2023), in their evidence to the Education Select Committee, state there is a 21% lower salary in comparison to Schools and SFCs, and approximately 25% of GFEC lecturers left the profession after one year and within three years 50% had left. In SFCs one in four lecturers and one in five managers had stated their intention to leave within a year (IFF Research, 2020). There is no current official government data on FE lecturer attrition. The Further Education College Workforce Analysis (DfE, 2021) analysed FE pay and attrition rates based on Teacher's Pension Scheme data. This ceased in 2021, superseded by the FEWDC which does not gather figures on FE staff churn. Recruitment of lecturers, particularly vocational, is also problematic. Hanley and Orr (2019) thematically analysed semi-structured interview data from Human Resources and Engineering departments in 24 GFECs. They found recruitment for VET was hampered by low pay and competition with industry, difficulty in adjusting to being a lecturer, and an increased workload. Flemons *et al.* (2024) for the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER) utilised semi-structured interviews of 61 FE lecturers and Heads of Departments, and the FEWDC 2021/2022 (DfE, 2023b) data, and found the gap between lecturer renumeration and industry hampered VET recruitment. Odejimi and Ekpenyong (2019) assert many FE lecturers wish to move into HE and Tully (2023), examining FE lecturer recruitment and retention, concurs stating poor remuneration, instability of jobs and the perceived lack of status are key factors in professionals joining and leaving the sector. Lecturers' working lives and professional identities are key factors in recruitment and retention yet continual policy changes, student number competition, repeated funding cuts, curriculum changes, low wages, and high levels of scrutiny through a variety of observations and performance monitoring have left FE lecturers experiencing the highest degree of anxiety among educators with their levels of life satisfaction and worthwhileness decreasing from 2014 – 2018 (Wang and Zuccollo, 2020).

2.6 Casualisation, and lecturers' and managers' working lives

O'Neill and Fitzsimons (2020) surveyed and thematically analysed the responses of 113 recent graduates and a focus group of five from a university FE initial teacher training course in Ireland. The themes of precarity and low pay were the most predominant when the respondents commented on their experiences of their progression into FE employment. Instability and the lack of job security, additional workload covered by hourly pay, low pay rates and the lack of professional development – particularly when compared with the professional development afforded to their schoolteacher graduate counterparts, made them feel that they were regarded as lesser. The casual nature of the work and lack of employment opportunities made them experience disappointment, and distress that they could not meet their financial commitments. The authors discussed how these factors impacted upon the new lecturers' growing professional identity. Similarly, Fitzsimons, Henry and O'Neill (2022) discussed the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on Irish FE and HE casual lecturing staff examining the accentuation and exacerbation of the problems already related in the earlier study. However, although the Irish FE landscape is different to England (O'Leary and Rami, 2017), similar difficulties for English part-time lecturers in accessing professional development opportunities, and developing their own professional identity are mentioned when studying of English mid-career FE managers and lecturers' perceptions of engagement with professional development by Goldhawk (2024). Creating further difficulties for the casual lecturers' professional development is FE traditionally experiences a lack of professional development support and how lecturers and middle managers experience professional development is an under-researched area (Goldhawk and Waller, 2023). O'Leary and Rami (2017) related an FE business studies lecturer's story of uncertainty and fearfulness of being made redundant, or having his job role changed, or a salary freeze or cut. A survey of FE casual lecturers by UCU (2019a) also reported similar themes. Gadsby and Smith (2023) investigating mental health in FE during the pandemic similarly discuss how trepidation of funding and yearly student recruitment numbers cause uncertainty and worry for FE staff, yet they also discuss the professional love and care for the students shown by the lecturers stands in direct contrast to the demands of performativity and objectification of the student as a resource unit. Loveday (2018a; 2018b) studying casual HE lecturers' experiences identified themes of identity insecurity, removal of control over their lives and the need to be lucky to gain permanent employment, and the consideration of leaving. A narrative TA study of 20 HE lecturers

(Leathwood and Read, 2020) examined how casualisation impacted teaching and learning. It was found that the last-minute nature of course and module allocation created difficulties in preparation and delivery, and lecturer anticipatory stress surrounding the allocation of teaching hours. There was also a feeling of little power and limited autonomy. Staff and student working relationships and continuity of teaching suffered and there was a reported lack of access to facilities. Mason and Megoran's (2021) narrative research investigates how casual employment of HE lecturers and researchers led to feelings of dehumanisation, invisibility, exploitation, lack of agency, and again, a lack of identity. Gandy, Harrison and Gold (2018) also agree, highlighting identity, insecurity and limited access to professional development, and problems with recruitment and retention of casual HE lecturers.

Examining managers' perceptions of casual teaching staff in schools, Runge, Hudson-Sharp and Rolfe (2017) performed semi-structured telephone interviews of nine school managers and seven supply agencies, and a focus group of 12 supply teachers. The school managers identified concerns regarding skills levels, quality and experience of the agency staff. Difficulties with continuity of education, limited commitment from the agency workers, problems with understanding school culture and engagement with training and personal development activities were recorded. Equally, Hanley and Orr (2019) investigating the difficulties of recruiting VET lecturers in 24 English FE colleges detailed the challenges the managers faced when using agency lecturing staff. These included high costs and variable quality and commitment of lecturers which impacted parents' evenings, recruitment events etc. which had to be fulfilled by the permanent lecturers, increasing their workload. Archer, Pajo and Lee (2013) interviewed casual workers in five sectors in New Zealand, including in education, to ascertain the effect relationships with their managers had upon their casual working life experiences. They found the manager had the ability to mitigate the uncertainty of the allocation of casual work by being sensitive and understanding, empathetic and including them in decision-making. Some of the participants, however, purported the manager could exercise power by encouraging the workers to compete for work; the workers felt unable to turn down work for fear they would not be allocated work in the future. The participants also commented upon the need for them to maintain favour in the manager's eyes but acknowledged this could change very quickly. Ryan, Connell and Burgess (2017) conducted semi-structured interviews with 27 Australian HE academic managers to determine their working relationships with casual lecturers. They identified all the managers understood funding shortfalls drove the need for casual lecturers. The casual

lecturers were generally excluded by the managers from integration into the full working of the department and university and often excluded from policies and procedures experienced by permanent lecturers. Similar to the Archer, Pajo and Lee (2013) study, the manager's networks and attitudes influenced work allocation.

2.7 Institutional attitudes towards further education

FE has frequently been termed the "Cinderella" of the education sector, from Kenneth Baker, the Education Secretary (1989) to *The Augur Review* (2019). This indicates its poor sister image within the education sector, although the metaphor was disputed by Petrie (2015; 2017) who replaced this with a metaphor drawing upon the twelve dancing princesses, where FE, although subjugated, still has space for professionalism. O'Leary and Rami (2017) suggest that funding cuts and policy churn in FE could be influenced by the attitudes of ministers and top civil servants towards a sector which only a small minority of them have experienced. Drawing upon Coffield (2015) they relate the story of Boris Johnson, as shadow HE minister, during a speech to senior leaders of FECs, displayed his lack of understanding of the sector as a whole by equating it to secondary moderns. Avis and Reynolds (2018) concur stating that the inferior image of FE is perpetuated as few of the people in Government, and in academic research, have experienced education in an FE College. From their interviews with a variety of 19 FE staff including senior and middle management and lecturers O'Leary and Rami (2017) posit the interviewees felt FE was misunderstood; its key role within the economy and the local community overlooked, and senior managers were unable to use the funding to provide local educational and training needs. Orr (2020) suggests this perception also extends to the perceptions of FE qualifications in comparison to university qualifications, and Gadsby and Smith (2023) equally suggest FE qualifications are viewed as lesser, aimed at students deemed to be inferior who have limited academic ability. They also purport neoliberalism and meritocracy perpetuates an understanding of FE as justifiably badly funded, inferior and bottom of the education sector, servicing students who are not hard-working or clever enough, and that this could translate to the perceptions of FE lecturers.

2.8 Gap in the literature

The term "Cinderella" (Baker, 1989; Petrie, 2015; Augur, 2019) applied to the attitudes towards (see 2.7), and funding of, the FE sector (see 2.4.3) can equally be applied to the paucity of literature devoted to FE. Coffield (2014, p. xiii) relates journalists told him FE was

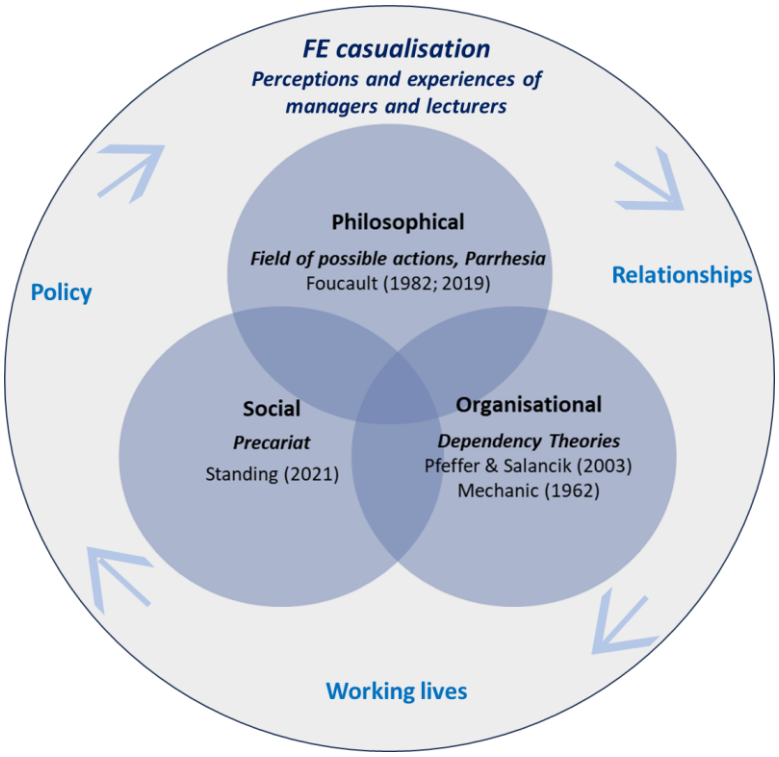
"'not sexy'; 'no-one's interested in FE'" and articles on FE would not gain publishing interest. Elliott (2017) expands this suggesting how limited research not only on FE but within FE, and the lack of a culture encouraging FE research perpetuates a failure of challenging FE practises and trend identification. Whilst there is a growing body of literature into the effects of casualisation on HE lecturers (Leathwood and Read, 2020) research into the working lives of FE lecturers, and particularly research focussed upon the effects of casualisation is scarce. For example, Jephcote and Salisbury (2009) discuss the deficiency of investigation of research into FE lecturers' working lives; Odejimi and Ekpenyong (2019) concur asserting FE research is limited and there is considerably less surrounding job satisfaction of FE lecturers. O'Neill and Fitzsimons (2020) consider the deficit in research relating to the employment conditions of FE lecturers in Ireland, and Fitzsimons, Henry and O'Neill (2022) further state research into casual lecturers is limited in Irish FE in comparison with research in HE, directly comparable with the situation in research in England into FE lecturer casualisation. The UCU reports (UCU, 2018; 2019a) and O'Leary and Rami (2017) investigate the effects of casual contracts on FE lecturers, but these are the exceptions in a general dearth of research into FE in comparison with HE and schools. Archer, Pajo and Lee (2013) interviewed New Zealand casual workers, including teachers, on their perceptions of the manager/casual employee relationship, and Ryan, Connell and Burgess (2017) interviewed Australian HE academic managers, however there is limited literature from the manager perspective of casualisation generally, and very little on English FE settings. Tully (2023) states his paper is the first to fully investigate FE lecturer recruitment and retention, and he also highlights the lack of churn analysis of FE lecturers. The NFER report (2024), which utilised the 2021/2022 FEWDC (DfE, 2023b), also states data and research into FE lecturer recruitment and retention is limited. The precariat (Standing, 2021) progressives group as a location for FE casual lecturers, and whether they would fit into a dangerous class, nor where the FE managers might also be placed, is also absent from the literature.

2.9 Theoretical framework

The core of this research was the perceptions and stories of the working lives and relationships of FE lecturers and managers through the lens of the policy of casualisation, and how this affects them, their career choices, and the organisation. A theoretical framework is to aid analysis not dictate results to fit into its requirement (Trowler, 2012)., Ball (1995), and Murphy (2013) considers a single theory is incapable of conducting and

handling multifarious and varied analysis. Therefore, to answer the research questions, a tripartite theoretical framework was developed, comprising philosophical power theory, organisation dependency theories and social theories. The framework melded Foucault's philosophies of the "field of other possible actions" (Foucault, 1982, p. 791) and care of the self to investigate the lecturers' and the managers' power decisions and how each other's actions modify the power and working lives and relationships of and between them. Foucault's "Parrhesia" (Foucault, 2001; 2019) was applied to investigate the influences upon the participants' ability to speak out. The Foucauldian aspect of the framework was married with the social theory of Standing's (2008; 2014; 2016; 2018; 2023) precariat, utilising the salariat and the Progressive classes (this is fully described in 2.1). The organisational theory of Pfeffer and Salancik's (2003) dependent organisation and Mechanic's (1962) dependent relationships managerial theories were also coalesced to create a tripartite framework capable of handling the variety of data garnered from the participant interviews. The interwoven theoretical framework is shown in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3 – Tripartite theoretical framework



2.9.1 Selection of a Foucauldian lens

Foucault has been used by a plethora of educational researchers over many years (Ball, 2019; Allan, 2022) and his philosophies permeate the literature discourse of performativity, governmentality, teachers' professional identity and resilience, working life relationships,

and precarious employment. Ball (2019) utilises Foucault's philosophies of self-formation when considering ways to view education differently and explores Foucault's philosophies of performativity and governmentality when reviewing English education (Ball, 2018). Additionally, he applies Foucault's theories on truths and refusals to view the struggle between truth-telling and the performativity culture in his investigation of senior school leaders' mental struggles with performativity (Ball, 2016). Towers and Maguire (2023) reference Foucault's work when describing how policy reforms dictate the desire for power over managerial control in teacher education policy, and in teaching in general. Perryman *et al.* (2017) use the lens of Foucault's pastoral power to review how the demands of performativity force teachers' implementation of policies into their practice. Foucault's lectures on governmentality are equally used to explore how the need to re-frame the subjugated oneself to be resilient and to adapt is necessary when in uncertain work (Joronen and Rose, 2021). In a study of the gig economy Tirapani and Willmott (2023) frame their discussions using Foucault's ideas of truths and refusals, oppressions, subjugation and struggle.

These power relationships, provoked by the impermanence of employment and the implementation of performativity, relate to Foucault's exposition on "The subject and power" (1982), that

> *The exercise of power is not simply a relationship between partners, individual or collective; it is a way in which certain actions modify others (1982, p. 788).*

Translated to this research this is indicative of the decisions and choices of the managers and lecturers, influencing the interplay of power relationships and extending this to their working lives. Within the research it is important to comprehend Foucault's dual definition of subject: the first is to be subjected to the power exertions of another through dependency, the second is to be subjected to one's own "conscience or self-knowledge" (Foucault, 1982, p. 781). The first definition of subject aids understanding of FE organisational and funding relationships with government, and the interplay of the power relationships of the FE managers and lectures. The second definition of subject helps understanding of the relationships of casualisation and the decisions of the managers and lecturers in how they choose to act. He also introduces the "field of other possible actions" (Foucault, 1982, p. 791); power is rooted within society, and how one chooses to act can change how others respond. This, coupled with the definitions of subject, can be used to explain how lecturers and managers could choose to exercise their own power over others,

and themselves. Foucault purports a power relationship is only possible where the power exerted is towards a free subject, either an individual or, additionally in this research, an FE organisation, and that this power exertion engenders a range of reactions and behaviours in both the subject and the executor. He expresses “slavery is not a power relationship when man is in chains” (Foucault, 1982, p. 789) declaring when the pervading elements of the power exertion overwhelm the possibilities of choices or refusals of the subject a power relationship cannot exist. Enhancing this argument Ball and Olmedo (2013, p. 86) deliberate on “the care of the self”; even though a person’s identity is influenced and governed by the circumstances in which they find themselves, they also are in control of their identity. This relates to Foucault’s (1982) modification, that their actions modify both themselves and others.

Secondly, Foucault’s notions of “Parrhesia” (2001; 2019) examines the ability to tell the truth and to speak out as being afforded by one’s place in a hierarchical society, citing analogical examples from classical literature where only freemen or citizens were allowed to speak. This is a strong metaphor to view the effects of casualisation through, debating the casual employee’s fearfulness of the temporariness and instability of their employment potentially negating their ability to speak truthfully. The manager’s position in the hierarchy could also constrain their capacity to tell the truth. The culture and policies of the organisation could determine their actions, forcing the use of casualisation, and implementing performance management, even if they disagreed with these measures. Ball (2016) discusses the parrhesiac gagging effects of performativity expressed in the emails of several school leaders, where unable to refuse the implementation of performance management, by implication, subjected their staff to its demands. Smith and O’Leary (2013) when investigating the stories of student FE lecturers of the effects of NPM and austerity briefly discuss Foucault’s Parrhesia (2019), asserting the anonymity of the participants was paramount as speaking out engendered fear of risking employment prospects or status in a culture of funding cuts, annual budgets and marketisation. Utilising Foucault’s (1982) “field of other possible actions” and definitions of subject, combined with the Foucauldian idea of parrhesia (2001; 2019) became the first part of the tripartite theoretical framework.

2.9.2 Organisation and managerial framework

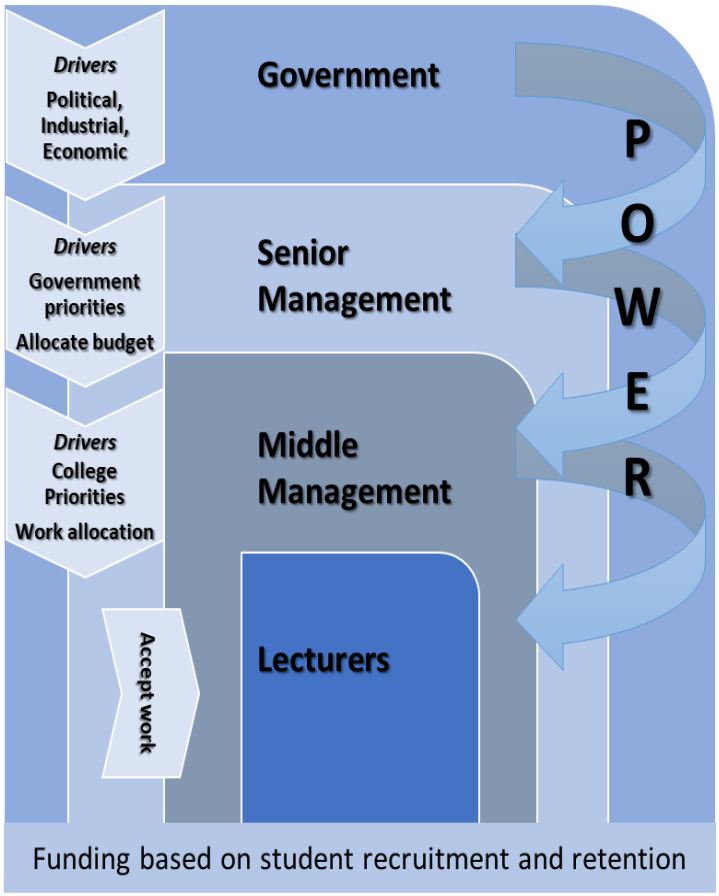
The neoliberal agenda created complex power structures within FE that still exist. There are multiple drivers upon FE which have created managerial power structures and the increase in casualisation: marketisation and funding structures, local needs, Ofsted

inspection requirements, and government control (see 2.3). The marketisation of FE in the 1990s, although introducing competition between providers still relied heavily upon public funds as its main provider. With its subsummation back into public control (DfE, 2022a) FECs dependency upon the government has been strengthened. The Secretary of State for Education has the power to direct FE Governing bodies and appoint or remove members. FE's finances are fully subject to government guidance and funding cannot be borrowed from private providers without Government permission (Lewis and Bolton, 2023). Governmental power over the funding of FE has always been a driving force, controlling FE's directions and pressing through government's policies (Augur, 2019), and this furtherance of governmental power and policy changes increases its hold over FE, diminishing FE's ability to define itself (FETL, 2021). Lewis and Bolton (2023), in a House of Commons Library briefing paper, detail government FE funding complexities, with different budgets for different age groups allocated by a multitude of different bodies, departments and quangos.

Pfeffer and Salancik (2003), introducing the dependent organisation, review how funding dependency influences the power structures within organisations and assert an organisation whose dependency rests with a sole funding provider is less powerful than an organisation that can access several funding streams. This can be applied to FE (see Figure 2.4). Equally, Lukes (2005) summarises power to be one body affecting another body, and his first face of power - decision-making for an organisation or an individual, which may or may not involve coercion also applies, aiding the description of the government's power over FE, and the top-down hierarchical managerial control within FE. However, FE is not answerable solely to the government; Ofsted play a major role in control, with the *Education Inspection Framework* (UK Government, 2023b) dictating the types of administration, target and achievement gathering, and teaching and learning documentation, safeguarding actions, and observations. In their own report (Ofsted, 2019) acknowledged senior leaders increased administration to meet their perceived need to prepare for Ofsted. Local needs are also expected to be met, and achievements reported upon annually in an Accountability Agreement by FE providers, with direction from the government to meet the local needs it specifies, for 2024-2025 this is to be judged against the National Skills Priorities (DfE, 2023b). Representative of a dependent organisation as defined by Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) Figure 2.4 demonstrates the influence of the drivers upon FE and how this affects the power hierarchy of academic managers and lecturers. The government holds the power, and its policies are influenced by economic, industrial, and

political drivers. Funding allocation is reliant upon this, and upon the FEC's student recruitment, retention, and achievement. The flow of power moves from government to the senior management within FE who have to consider government policies, Ofsted priorities, local needs, and student numbers; they set the HR recruitment policies, and devolve the budget downwards. Middle management, in accordance with college policy priorities, recruit and staff courses in line with student numbers and courses, allocate and de-allocate work to lecturers, with the permanent lecturers being the first to receive course allocation. This demonstrates a power structure in which the lecturer is on the lowest tier, with little power, and limited influence over policy, teaching or course allocation.

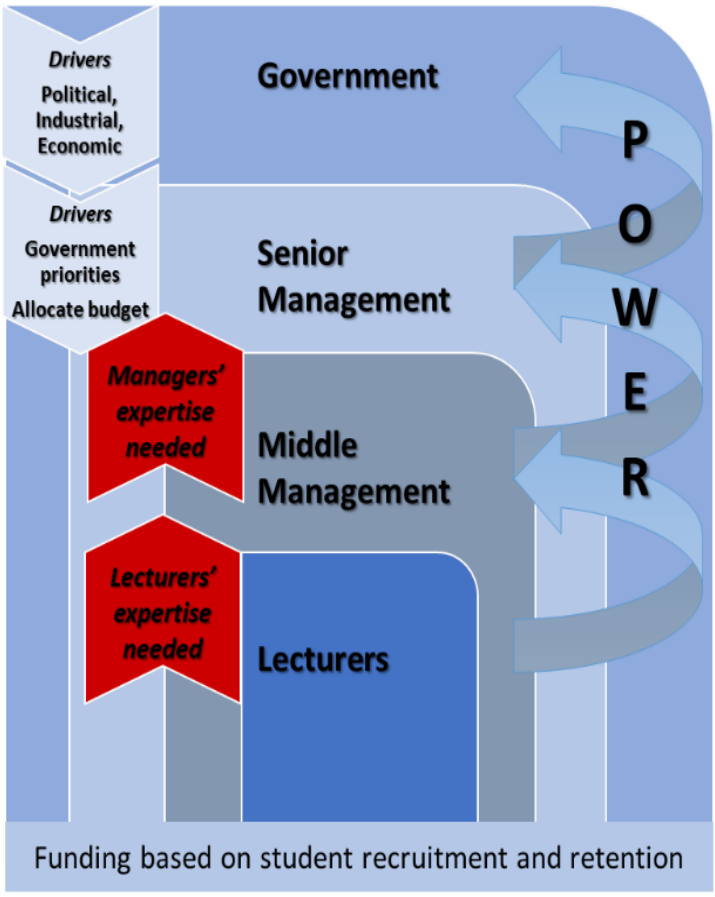
Figure 2.4 - Pfeffer and Salancik's (2003) FE dependent organisation



In contrast Mechanic (1962) argues lowest hierarchical level employees exert power upwards, their skills and knowledge being key to the organisation's success, with the manager reliant upon them for their knowledge and expertise, their network within the organisation and that they remain in the organisation. In FE the management is reliant upon the expertise of the lecturer in their teaching abilities, subject, and the curriculum in order to deliver the courses and student achievement, and aid student satisfaction therefore retention and potential further recruitment due to FEC success rates. This also

impacts upon Ofsted ratings and inspections. Thus, in FE, forcing power upwards, from the lecturer to the managers, the managers to the senior managers and up to the Government (see Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5 - FE dependent relationship (Mechanic, 1992)



2.10 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the precariat (Standing, 2008; 2014; 2016; 2018; 2023) as a structure within which to view the rise and effects of neoliberalism, NPM and casualisation of employment. The multiple policy changes since the 1990s and their effects upon FE marketisation and funding, casual employment, vacancy rates, recruitment and attrition and FE pay have been investigated. Institutional attitudes towards FE have been considered. The gap in the literature has been identified, with research into FE as a whole, and FE casualisation in particular being sparse. Finally, a tripartite framework of social theory of the precariat (Standing, 2023) (see 2.1), philosophical theories of power (Foucault, 1982; 2001; 2019) and organisational theories of dependency (Mechanic, 1962; Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003) has been detailed.

The next chapter explains and justifies the qualitative research design choice of interpretive constructivism with autoethnography and narrative research. My positionality within the

research, the use of reflexivity, and ethical considerations are considered. The methodology of data collection through semi-structured interviews, its analysis and the development of idiom themes using reflective TA are discussed.

3 Research design and methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter details the research design and methodology. The philosophical rationale for the choice of a qualitative, interpretive constructivist design, incorporating narrative research and autoethnography are explained. This is followed by a discussion of my positionality, ethical considerations and the pilot study. Advantages and limitations of the research approach, validity and reliability are contemplated. The methodology where the process of data gathering using semi-structured interviews and TA are detailed, and the use of idiom themes is explicated. Finally, the chapter concludes with a reflection on the research design and methodology employed.

3.2 Choice of qualitative research design with interpretive constructivism

The ontological, epistemological and paradigmatic approach is fundamental to answering the research questions and as this drives the choice of research strategy, research design, and methods of data analysis, it is essential that the rationale for the choices are clarified (Creswell and Poth, 2016; Blaikie and Priest, 2019). Choosing a paradigm necessitates the researcher to comprehend the underpinning philosophy of the research (Blaikie and Priest, 2017); ontology is the assumptions surrounding what constitutes reality, and epistemology is how that reality is known or studied, linked to axiology – the beliefs and values held by the researcher (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). Savin-Baden and Major (2013) discuss a three-fold definition of ontology: how reality exists and what it is; how and what social entities should be seen and are; and an examination of the relationship between the world and society and individuals. Blaikie and Priest (2019) define epistemology as the means by which understanding of social reality is known, and Crotty (1998 p.3) concurs stating epistemology as being "a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know."

The research questions (see 1.9.3) investigated the many different views and realities of the participants' working lives and relationships (including my own) seen through the prism of casual contracts, and the analysis and findings examined the themes that were constructed from the participants' interviews. These considerations prompted the adoption of an idealist ontology, as Blaikie (2007) maintains this ontology provides social reality being within a culture constructed and created, interpreted and understood by the people within it. Additionally, the epistemology of intersubjective constructivism under the

interpretive paradigm allowed for my own positionality within the research, acknowledging an inability, nor desire, to be fully objective, whilst allowing my participants to narrate their own stories. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) explore how reality can be understood through discussion, although these shared understandings can be construed differently according to each person's viewpoint (Graneheim, Lindgren and Lundman, 2017). Creswell (2007) discusses qualitative researchers embrace many different realities and present multiple perspectives from the participants in the research, and Denzin and Lincoln (2011) define qualitative research as a project of inquiry that examines the world through human interaction. Equally, Cohen, Louis and Manion (2018) determine qualitative research allows participants a voice and enables intensive study of participants' actions and attitudes. These three definitions summarise the intent of the research – to capture and give meaning to the constructs and experiences of the participants and portray these to the wider community (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982). Savin-Baden and Major (2013) also contend the interpretive paradigm views social reality being interdependent upon the mutual understanding of the actors' and the researcher's lives and this encompasses the researcher comprehending the continual situational interpretation of the participants by being embedded within their world. Creswell and Creswell (2018) consider a social constructivist worldview where the researcher, influenced by their own life experiences and views, seeks comprehension of the complex, individual interpretations of the participants who search for meaning within their lives and work. The researcher utilises narrative open questioning to discover the realities of the participants. These approaches of interpretive constructivism tallied with my shared experiences of casual contracts within FE, influencing my research, from both the manager and lecturer viewpoint.

The interpretive constructivist philosophy enabled exploration of the power structures and cultures on a macro and micro level, and was fitting for the choice of an autoethnographical, narrative research study; a research method incorporating a personal, political nature, providing the reader with insight into the challenges, problems and cultural issues detailed by the researcher (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011). Denzin (2014) determined autoethnographic work is interventional, a means of providing people who are often voiceless with an opportunity to speak and be heard; an interpretation of autoethnography which tallied with my desire for the research to not solely inform the discussion surrounding casual contracts in FE, but to help to create change in employment practices.

3.3 Narrative research and autoethnographical choices

Narrative research and autoethnography formulated as the shift from positivism to postmodernism with the increasing use of qualitative research through the 1970s to 1980s occurred. Researchers questioned how objectivity could be applied to the study of other people, particularly in the ethnographic field, with Hayano (1979, p. 103) describing this as the "inescapable, recurrent problem of the human presence in data collection." Also influencing objectivity was how the more dominant within society could extend oppression for their own gain (Hughes and Pennington, 2017), effectively illustrated by Mertens (2007) as she details her students' reaction to a cartoon of a town crier declaring that a poll had indicated that the King of Id was highly popular, with the last frame showing the King stating he owned the station that ran the poll. In addition, objectivity was starting to be considered an impossibility as the nature of observing, questioning and recording the culture under research could affect how the participants reacted. The Heisenberg uncertainty principle is frequently used to explain this. Heisenberg noticed when electrons were observed through an electron microscope they moved more quickly than was normal due to the heat from the equipment; the Heisenberg uncertainty principle illustrates how observation and investigation can alter the behaviours of the observed (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982) rendering a truly objective study unattainable. Another principle applied to research is the Hawthorne effect, where the participant changes their behaviour or, in the case of autoethnography and narrative research, their story, because of the attention or observation that they are receiving from the researcher (Sedgwick and Greenwood, 2015). Thus, qualitative research, and autoethnography and narrative research were born from the perception that subjectivity is prevalent in research. Harmonising with my wish to obtain, interpret and share the participants' and my own stories of the effects of casualisation, with the richness and depth of the understanding of lived experiences (Punch and Oancea, 2014) is O'Grady, Clandinin and O'Toole's (2018) description of narrative research. They describe this as the study of experience through the narration of stories, a means of using human lived experiences as a significant resource for gaining knowledge (Clandinin, 2023). Clandinin and Caine (2008) determine this commences with an inquiry by the researcher into their own personal stories, prior to the gathering of the stories of others; the autoethnographical and autobiographical nature of this narrative research approach corresponded with my participation as an interviewee.

Comparably with my interpretive constructivist stance, and my presence within the research, Adams, Ellis and Jones (2017, p. 1) proffer autoethnographical research "uses personal experience ('auto') to describe and interpret ('graphy') … experiences, beliefs, and practices ('ethno')." Additionally, echoed within my positionality (see 3.4), Hayano (1979) asserts autoethnographers are researchers who study their own or a community with which they have attained a close understanding of, and that the autoethnographer must self-identify, and be accepted, as part of the community being observed. Resonating with the direction of the research, Etherington (2018) considers autoethnography as a subdivision of ethnography where the researcher sits in the centre of their research, allowing their story to be narrated and reflected upon, and gaining an understanding of the socio-political and cultural context of the events narrated. Adams and Manning (2015) assert autoethnographers assume the self is influenced by culture, therefore in portraying themselves in their research they inevitably discuss the cultural influences that have been key to their experiences. However, it is not merely the gathering and understanding of stories, the researcher's emotions and their subjectivity influences the research; an epiphanic event frequently drives the research field choice with the researcher expressing and investigating their experiences to illuminate and transform the reader and the researcher (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011). My epiphanic moment (see 1.2) followed an interview for a permanent position at the FE College in which I was working on two zero-hours contracts for two different departments – I was offered the permanent contract and, on putting the phone down, I burst into tears; the overwhelming gratitude and relief I experienced was followed by an intense sense of anger that I should feel this way. I decided at that moment that I wished to understand, research and reflect upon my personal feelings and the reasons for the overwhelming, conflicting emotions I experienced having been offered a permanent role in FE; I was interested in how managers felt about casual contracts, and whether other lecturers in a similar position to myself experienced the same financial worries, vulnerabilities and emotional feelings.

In evocative autoethnography Adams, Ellis and Jones (2017) expound the researcher constructs a literary text, using storytelling techniques to provide the reader with a version of the event. Weaving backwards and forwards throughout their story the researcher examines their own personal vulnerabilities, seeking the context and cultural influences (Ellis, 2007). Analytical autoethnography, first introduced by Anderson (2006), sought to bring autoethnography within more acknowledged traditional qualitative inquiry social research methodologies (Anderson, 2006). He purported the researcher needed to be fully

immersed within the field, exercise analytical reflexivity, be conscious of the reciprocity between themselves, the setting and the observed, be evident within the research, and discuss the research with their participants. They also needed to practise theoretical analysis showing not just the world within which they are immersed but documenting and producing "broader generalisations" (Anderson, 2006, p.388) which could be utilised for change within the phenomena under investigation. My research met these criteria of analytical autoethnography (see 3.4), yet also met elements of the evocative, utilising mine and the participants' stories to weave a narrative for change.

3.4 Reflexivity, positionality and the participatory interview

Clandinin and Caine (2008) in their consideration of reflexivity, argue narrative research commences with the reflections of the researcher upon their own experiences and positioning in the research, and this needs to continue throughout the research process. Mirroring and extending this view, Holmes (2020) expresses the researcher should accept and understand their positionality prior to and during the research process, acknowledging the process itself can change their position and viewpoints, influence analysis and evaluation of their own work, and their interpretation of the research of others. Berger (2015) agrees, proposing to apply intersubjectivity it is necessary to reflect upon one's own situation and feelings, and understand and mitigate their impact upon the research by continual self-reflection and self-discussion, whilst being cognizant of the researcher positionality influencing the research. She considers three ways the research can be influenced by the researcher's personal experiences. Firstly, if the researcher is embedded in the culture they are investigating, greater trust could be afforded to them by potential participants from the same field as they may feel the researcher will empathise with their situation. Secondly, how the participant responds and what they are willing to share can be shaped by the researcher's gender and position in the culture being investigated and/or their societal position. Finally, the views and attitudes, background and experiences of the researcher can shape how and what they ask the participants, and subsequently how they analyse and present the data and findings. To mitigate the effects of this Berger (2015) suggests reflexivity throughout the entire research process, and for the researcher to understand areas of questioning which they may personally find difficult, and an awareness of their views during the analysis. She purports reflexivity is an acknowledged key strategy in qualitative research whereas Palaganas *et al*. (2017) discuss its newness and worth is not currently widely understood. However, they posit the researcher's comprehension of the

interconnection between their own personal awareness of their insider status, stance and motivations within the research and the potential philosophical conflicts can be lessened and understood by reflexivity, concurring with Berger (2015).

Autoethnography predicates the researcher's experience being embedded within the research. In adhering to Anderson's (2006) analytical autoethnography criteria of the researcher being evident in the research and discussing their experiences with others within that field personally participating in an interview aided meeting these. The use of self within research has increased over time. Shufutinsky (2020, p. 52) posits the researcher's "use of self" is necessary for qualitative research to be reliable and legitimate as the researcher is the principal channel of the research, and this is particularly true for autoethnography. Kirkman (1999) purports narrative research necessitates acceptance of the researcher's position in their re-creation of the accounts of the participants. In her autobiographical research on fertility with 32 women (one of which was herself) she deemed it important to include her own experiences, and, as she met the participant criteria and was concerned this could influence the data, she chose to become part of the study. She produced her own narrative with the same structure she used when re-telling the other participants' stories. Adding her data to that of her participants helped her to understand their experiences more fully and aided her reflexivity. Similarly, Hanrahan (2023), when researching the lived experiences of nuns, positioned herself as a participant deliberating how she found an inability to distance her own life history from that of her participants, and how she believes the telling of personal stories can initiate societal change (Hanrahan, 2025).

With more than 15 years of experience in FE, and over 13 employed casually, I had been fully immersed within the field. My desire to conduct my research grew from the difficulties I had personally experienced whilst being employed as a casual FE lecturer, over many years (see 1.2 and 3.3), not able to financially plan my future, feelings of being under-valued, excluded and second class, and I wanted my research to help to change the experiences of others in FE. Being personally interviewed during the research openly acknowledged my presence and positionality helping me to clarify and understand my potential influences upon the research and analysis. Frels and Onwuegbuzie (2012) consider peer debriefing interviews aid reflection for qualitative researchers, allowing them to understand the interview process, and appreciate its emotional effect upon the participants, and to comprehend their own attitudes towards the research focus. This, they

propound, increases the researcher's ethical sensitivities, and reflection, and aids more robust research. Being interviewed by a third party helped me to analyse my own experiences and reflect upon the experiences of my participants (see 3.13). Probst (2016) detailed how two co-researchers participated in interviews in a study of social workers' experiences of mental health services, contemplating this as a means of transparency of positionality within the research aiding reflexivity, concurring with Kirkman (1999). The co-researchers discussed their experiences of being a "Both/and" (Probst, 2016, p.11) (researcher and a participant), being interviewed using the same interview schedule and questions as the other participants. They discussed feeling a certain vulnerability, understanding better the experiences related by the other participants, and comprehending their cultural influences within the research more clearly. This coalesced with my experience of participating in the study; it forced me to carefully examine my responses and perceptions, my vulnerabilities and biases, and helped me to understand my participants' perceptions and viewpoints better. Buys *et al.* (2022), investigating the challenges of interviewing HE academic peers, determined her experience within the field was an important addition to the experiences of her participants, and became both researcher and participant, participating in two interviews conducted in the same way as the interviews conducted with her participants. In agreement with Kirkman (1999) and Probst (2016), I felt acknowledging my presence within the research by a participatory interview aided full disclosure of my positioning and helped reflexivity, and believed my story, similarly to Buys *et al.* (2022) and Hanrahan (2025), would be difficult to exclude, and was an important addition to the research.

Reflecting upon the means to minimise my autoethnographical personal experiences influencing my participants' responses, during the interviews I adhered to the interview schedule questions and generally engaged in conversation only to clarify answers or prompt for additional information. This allowed the participant to tell their own story rather than me influencing their story by sharing mine, enabling a degree of intersubjectivity to be achieved. During the analysis and findings, I reflected upon my answers to ascertain whether I was putting forward my own experiences or choosing to summarise the experiences of my participants; I chose to rarely use my answers to summarise participants' perceptions, and carefully reflected upon when I used my autoethnographical answers to emphasise already given examples or to put forward examples that had not been stated by the participants.

3.5 Ethical and anonymity considerations

The research drew upon the British Educational Research Association (BERA) *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (BERA, 2018) and was approved by Staffordshire University's Ethics Committee on 09/08/2022, and amended and re-approved to change the date which the participant could withdraw their data on 28/07/2023. Included in the approval was the interview schedule (appendix 5), the biographical questionnaire (appendix 6), the information sheet (appendix 7) and the consent form (appendix 8). General approval to conduct interviews on a number of FEC premises was obtained from the Principals prior to interviews being held. The Principals were not informed of the where, when or who to preserve anonymity.

Care was taken in the data transcription to preserve anonymity as some of the lecturers displayed extreme nervousness at the possibility of being identified. The original approach towards anonymity was to have been to change participants' names and working locations, with part of the study being a comparison of experiences by gender, years of service, and vocational subject. However, in light of the expressed fearfulness of identification the participants were semi-fictionalised (see 3.9.1 and 3.9.2). They were given acronyms, gender was excluded, length of service was changed slightly, and any identifying information given during the interview was anonymised. This fearfulness is not unusual and was reflected in a study of pre-service and in-service student teachers in GFECs conducted by Smith and O'Leary (2013) and in a study of 44 HE casual academics by Loveday (2018a). It was also helpful for anonymity in my own data that I had worked in many different FE provider types in many different geographical areas over many years, therefore, identification of which FEC or lecturer or manager I might be referring to was made more difficult.

Ethically and reflectively, my position as a former FE lecturer, employed on casual contracts, needed to be clearly stated within the research. My initial manager participant sample included three former managers that I had previously worked for, on casual contracts, which caused ethical considerations. However, these participants withdrew prior to interview, and I recruited participants from a variety of FECs or departments in which I had not worked (see 3.9.1). Fortuitously, this helped to create a more objective stance and removed the ethical and potential bias problems associated with interviewing participants by whom I had been previously managed on casual contracts. Therefore, no prior pre-conceptions or views of the managers were brought to the interviews by themselves

towards me, and, as the managers were relatively unknown to me, conversely, the same applied. None of the managers employed or managed any of the lecturer participants, aiding anonymity and ethical considerations. Being a former FE employee, not associated contractually with any FEC at the time of the interviews, created distance between myself and the participants. Also, for myself, it helped me to understand and reflect more intensely, and objectively, upon my experiences as a casual FE lecturer, and allowed greater freedom to speak out without fear of career and employment repercussions (see 4.6.1 and 5.8). Having moved into HE, and out of the FE arena, I feel, increased the participants' perceptions and views of the validity of my researcher status, particularly the managers. Mikecz (2012) contemplates the challenges when interviewing elites (see 3.12) and my career change helped to minimise any perceived power differential between myself and the manager participants, with their perception of me as researcher, rather than as an employee lecturer.

3.6 Pilot study

In 2021 a pilot study was conducted to trial the suitability of the narrative semi-structured interview, the follow-up interview, the interview schedules and questions (see appendix 4), and ascertain whether TA using NVivo software was efficacious. The choice of sample was one of convenience (Golzar, Noor and Tajik, 2022), who displayed similar characteristics to the target participants (Taherdoost, 2016). They were a known health and social care senior manager employing casualised staff, and they had also been a casual part-time HE lecturer. The interviews were conducted over MS Teams following Staffordshire University's 2020/2021 COVID-19 guidelines. The interview schedule, and the narrative semi-structured interview were found to be beneficial in collecting detailed intense information. Following the interview, two questions were added to the schedule - the perception of the benefits of and drawbacks of employing or being employed on casual contracts (see 3.10). Also, the follow-up interview was removed from the main study as the participant commented upon the difficulty in committing more time to the research, and did not wish to make changes to the transcript. The use of TA in theme development, and NVivo were successful. The process helped to assure myself the skills I had developed throughout my career and educational background were enabling to conduct the interview, and for TA.

3.7 Limitations of the research approach

The qualitative approach has caused paradigmatic arguments within the research community from the 1980s (Gage, 1989), with the validity of qualitative interpretive approaches being questioned by post-positivist quantitative researchers, and, as Denzin (2008) purports, the perceived need for researchers and students to class themselves as qualitative or quantitative. Quantitative research generally uses large sample sizes, and as discussed by Ochieng (2009) the research findings are statistically tested for significance, therefore can be applied across a variety of populations whereas qualitative sampling utilises smaller populations which could be seen as statistically insignificant. Rahman (2016) explains qualitative data gathering takes time in comparison to quantitative data gathering, although he states weaknesses in quantitative approaches are the data looks at one moment in time and does not intensely investigate experiences of the participants. Of additional concern, as Braun and Clarke (2023) ponder, narrative interviews rely upon the story told by the participant at a given point in time (Jovchelovitch and Bauer, 2000), and Brown (2006) contemplates potential problems with the interviewee's plurivocity, where their story could change dependent upon apprehension over anonymity, response to the researcher, or the culture in which they are in; factors which applied to the lecturer participants of the research. Equally, the subsequent analysis being performed by the researcher who could bring their own personal bias to the interpretation, theme development, or lack the ability to interpret or retell the story satisfactorily (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013) could be validity issues. These issues can be directed at the choice of autoethnography, as the researcher uses their own experiences and investigates their personal vulnerabilities throughout the research process (Ellis and Bochner, 2006) which can influence subjectivity, and be challenging for the researcher to relive and explore potentially difficult experiences. However, as discussed (see 3.4) the recognition of the positionality, and reflexivity of the researcher aids validity and reliability and helps to overcome these potential qualitative issues.

3.8 Validity and reliability

There are hesitancies regarding the trustworthiness of data from qualitative research (see 3.7). Following the recommendations of Creswell and Creswell (2018) a variety of validation methods were utilised. Rich, details of the narratives were presented using the actual words of the participants in the findings, which can enable the reader to immerse themselves in the experience related. My biases and experiences were clearly articulated

in the design, by the use of my own data, and in the findings, and I practised reflexivity throughout the process which aided reliability of the data (see 3.4). Careful consideration during transcription, multiple re-checks, and reflexivity throughout the analysis and findings also helped. A peer reviewed the study, to give an external interpretation, and subsequently asked questions to prompt different views to be taken. A retired scientist who was unfamiliar with the subject also reviewed the work, questioning different aspects, particularly those of data. The differing views held by the participants were shown in the Findings which aided full representation of the variety of responses (see 4). Member checking (where the participant reviews the transcript and/or findings) was initially considered as a validation method. During the pilot study (see 3.6) the participant was asked to review the transcript and participate in a second interview to discuss it. However, the participant did not amend the transcript and commented upon the additional time it took them to re-read and attend the second interview. They deemed this unnecessary. On reflection, in the main study, it was decided to only send the transcript to the participant, not to re-interview. During the interview phase of the main study, the first three participants stated they did not wish to review the transcript. This raised doubts on the legitimacy of using this technique as a valid check and was revisited. It was decided to remove the transcript approval as a validity check, and the information sheet was revised, ethical approval was given (see appendix 7). This removed an issue I had been conscious of with the use of member-checking. I had worried the subject matter being discussed might be distressing for the participants and return of the transcript might re-ignite emotions experienced. Equally, I had been concerned if I did not agree with changes made by the participants, I may have had to exclude their corrections, as mentioned by Savin-Baden and Major (2013). Morse (2015) questions the practicalities of member checking, discussing the complications if the participant is unhappy with the transcription or analysis, and the ethical problems this causes for the researcher. The positives and negatives of the credibility of member checking are summarised by Birt *et al.* (2016). They conclude the efficacy of this technique is dependent on the type of research and should encourage the engagement of the participants within the research, if not, they concur with Morse (2015) that member checking, in these circumstances is not valid. During the time between the interview and the transcription the participants may have changed their views as was seen in the interviews conducted by Mero-Jaffe (2011) who discuss the problems of participants seeing grammatical errors or colloquialisms in their speech.

Reliability and validity of the qualitative data were achieved by trialling the interview instruments and analysis approach during the pilot study (see 3.6), identification of ten participants, from different backgrounds with a wide variety of FE experience in each sample (see 3.9), collection of rich, thick data (Creswell and Miller, 2000), with continual reflexivity (see 3.14), repeated checking of the transcripts, and peer and expert review of the research.

3.9 Population and sample

The population for the study comprised a purposive sample of five FE academic managers and five FE lecturers. Inclusion criteria were developed to ensure the data would gather extensive relevant information from the participants to address the research questions. The first was that all had been employed within publicly funded FECs. Secondly, the managers needed to have employed several lecturers, over a period of time, on casual contracts to be able to provide rich narratives surrounding their experiences. It was also important to recruit managers from different levels and disciplines of the managerial hierarchy to capture differing views from strategy setting to implementation to gain maximum variation (Miles and Huberman, 1994). To gain up to date experiences from the lecturers they had to be either currently employed, or employed within one year, in publicly funded FE, have extensive recent experience of casual FE lecturing and, where possible, selected from different disciplines. The sample size within qualitative studies is small to allow for in-depth study, and this sample followed the rationale for multiple case sampling (Miles and Huberman, 1994) - the selection of interviewing and collecting the potentially contrasting life histories of the impact of casual contracts from an employer and employee perspective enabled differences and similarities to be constructed.

3.9.1 FE academic manager sample recruitment strategy

Initially, the FE manager sample had been identified through convenience sampling (Golzar, Noor and Tajik, 2022). Five managers, from two FECs in which I had worked, had been approached and tacit agreement to participate had been given. I had been employed by three of the managers on casual contracts. This had been a convenient and homogeneous representation with a typical case phenomenon as discussed by Adams (2015). However, only one of the original managers (from a different discipline and who had not managed me) eventually participated. This necessitated rethinking the sample, and during a research presentation a call for FE manager and lecturer participants was given. This resulted in one FE manager agreeing to participate, and using snowball sampling (Parker, Scott and

Geddes, 2019) where one participant suggests other participants, they recommended a further FE manager for interview, who then invited an additional FE manager to the interview. The final FE manager was an already known network sample and recruited through a chance meeting. All the FE managers had experience of working in different FE settings, in different areas of England.

The need to find new manager participants, recruited from a geographically wider area and greater FEC provider types, enabled the study to reflect a wider representation of managerial cultures and casual contract experiences, and allowed different "instances", "representative", "negative" and "discrepant" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 34) to be obtained (see Table 3.1). Furthermore, the withdrawal of the managers I had worked for on casual contracts reduced the ethical and power differential considerations (see 3.4).

Table 3.1 - FE academic manager sample – summary and experience

Manager Acronym	FE experience	Years in FE	No of lecturers employed on casual contracts	Still in FE	Currently a manager?	Management position
MPA	Multiple FEC provider types	16+	6	No	Recently left	Head of Department
MPB	Multiple FEC provider types	14+	10	No	No	Curriculum Manager
MPC	Multiple FEC provider types	30+	Multiple	Yes	Yes	Principal and Chief Executive
MPD	GFECs	30+	Multiple	Yes	Yes	Deputy Chief Executive
MPE	GFECs	16+	10	Yes	Yes	Head of Faculty

3.9.2 FE lecturer sample recruitment strategy

Two lecturers had been chosen using networking and snowballing (Parker, Scott and Geddes, 2019). An email asking for lecturer participants from the Principals of FECs (the type, number and locations of the FECs has been excluded to maintain anonymity) was sent out (see appendix 9). This generated one participant. A fourth participant was recruited through a network sample following an online research presentation. The fifth participant was myself (see Table 3.2). None of the lecturer participants were employed or managed by the manager participants.

Table 3.2 - FE lecturer sample – summary and experience

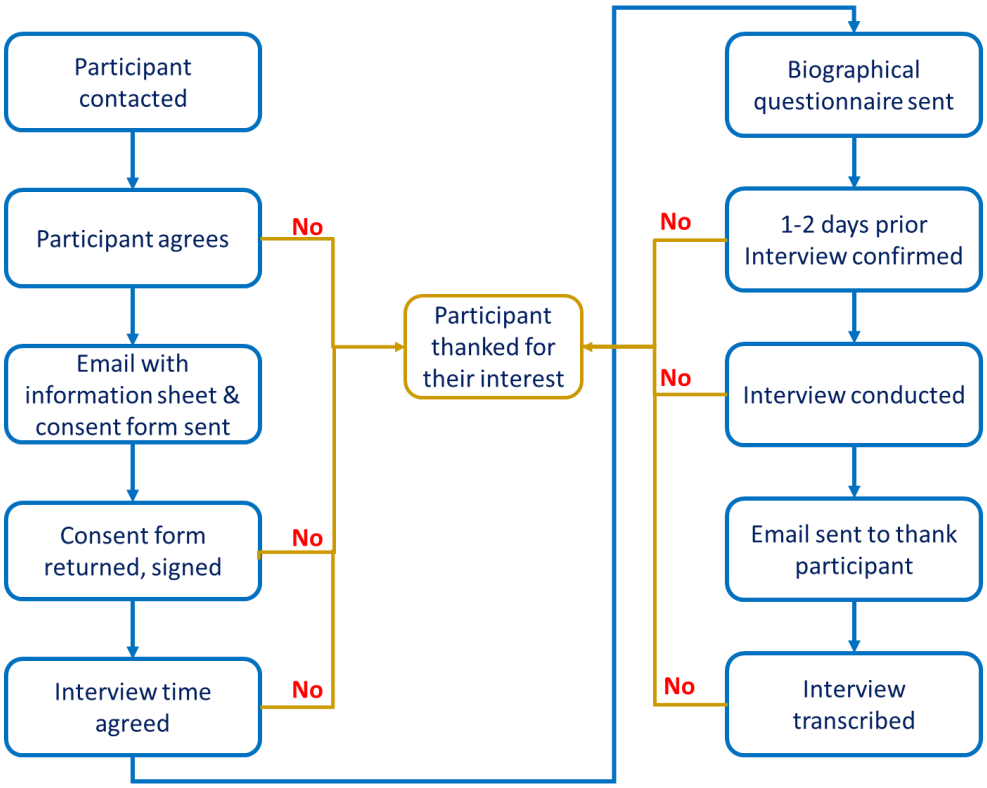
Lecturer Acronym	FE experience	Approx Yrs in FE	Approx Yrs on casual contracts	Type of FE contracts employed on over time	Still in FE
LPA	OPFEs GFECs SFCs	8	2	Permanent Fixed-term Part-time fixed-term	No - recently left
LPB	GFECs OPFEs	Under 15	10	Variable (2 hour minimum) term time only Zero-hours term time only Permanent variable FTE	Yes, Permanent Part-time FTE. and zero-hours. other providers
LPC	GFECs OPFEs PSPFs SFCs	25+	11	Zero-hours term time only Permanent part-time (0.5) Permanent part-time (0.4)	No - recently left
LPD	GFECs SFCs OPFEs	Under 19	15	Zero-hours term time only Supply/Agency Permanent	Yes, Permanent. and zero-hours, other providers
LPE	GFECs OPFEs PSPFs SFCS	15+	13+	Supply/Agency P/t hourly Zero-hours term time only Part-time fixed-term Permanent	No - recently left

3.10 Interview schedules and interview questions

A manager and a lecturer interview schedule (see appendix 5) was produced guided by the learning from the pilot study (see 3.6). The interview schedule questions were developed with consideration of the guidance of Kallio *et al.* (2016) to ensure that the questions would prompt the narration around the research topic, enabling a flexible structure to permit discussion within the interview, allow fluidity from one question to another and provide the ability to change the order of the questions if needed during the interview. Creswell and Poth (2016) deliberate the questions developed for the interview should be based upon the research questions (see 3.2); Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000) argue the interview questions aid the researcher to guide the interview through a tripartite structure: establishing themes, shaping the question order, and ensuring the questions are in the language understood by the participants. The interview questions (see appendix 5) developed for the managers and lecturers were considered carefully to prompt the participant and enable them to fully engage, explore and conclude their narration and perceptions of the event. Rowley (2012) considers between six to twelve questions supplemented with up to four sub-questions is appropriate for a semi-structured interview,

and Kallio *et al.* (2016) similarly deliberate the use of a two-fold hierarchy of questions, the top level questions exploring the main themes and the second level to encourage the participant to explore their own viewpoint and experiences. Following these guidelines open questions to encourage narration surrounding the main themes of the experiences of casual contracts were developed, with secondary questions (prompts). Once ethical approval was given the data collection process (see Figure 3.1) began.

Figure 3.1 – The data collection process



3.11 Informed consent and arranging the interviews

Prior to the interview (see Figure 3.1) all the participants were emailed an information sheet (appendix 7) detailing the process of participation, and a consent form (see appendix 8Appendix 8); upon receipt of the electronically signed consent form the interview was arranged.

Mikecz (2012) and Glas (2021) discuss the need for flexibility in arranging the interview, at a time and place to suit the manager, to fit the managers' demanding timetables. However, Glas (2021) also asserts the same access challenges apply to non-managerial interviews. The access problems, and need for the researcher to establish themselves as knowledgeable and competent are similar to the elites, and reflexivity prior to and throughout the interview is suggested. To meet this the interview location choice was

driven by the participant to enable them to feel they had ownership within the interview and help them to relax, as, particularly for the lecturers, reliving their casual experiences could be emotional. Three manager interviews were held via Teams within their workplace; one was conducted in the manager's workplace and one at the University as the manager was also participating in a meeting within the vicinity. The lecturer interview locations also varied: one in the participant's workplace in their classroom, one in a meeting room at the University, one over MS Teams from their own home, and one face-to-face in their home. I was interviewed at the University. Once the interview had been arranged the biographical questionnaire (see appendix 6) was sent, and the date and time confirmed (see Figure 3.1).

The biographical questionnaire was designed to gather basic information (Forrester and Gunter, 2010) regarding the FE work experiences of the participants. This was utilised to enable a better understanding of the participant's career trajectory to allow for preparation and targeting of the questions for each individual prior to interview, reducing time during the interview.

3.12 Conducting the interviews

A narrative, semi-structured interview approach was utilised. The semi-structured interview approach has been used by similar studies investigating managers' and lecturers' working life and casualised contract experiences (Archer, Pajo and Lee, 2013; Hanley and Orr, 2019; O'Neill and Fitzsimons, 2020; Fitzsimons, Henry and O'Neill 2022; Flemons *et al.,* 2024) and is often used in studies adopting an analytical autoethnographical approach (Anderson, 2006) (see 3.3). The approach enabled the participant flexibility in their answers whilst being guided through an interview structure which encouraged them to remain within their narrative surrounding the effects of casualisation. The semi-structured interview also enables comparable information to be gathered from each participant whilst allowing the researcher to tailor the follow up questions to extract further detail (Adams, 2015). The semi-structured interview approach was trialled in the pilot study (see 3.6).

When conducting the manager interviews with what could be deemed as elites within the FE hierarchy, I was conscious of the potential power differential. Elites are defined by Glas (2021) as being at the hierarchical pinnacle of their organisation, and although only one participant was the Principal and Chief Executive, the others had all held what could be termed by the lecturers as elite positions. Although interviewing elites in their own workspace may influence the power relationship (Mikecz, 2012) it was necessary to fit with their schedules (see 3.11). Mikecz (2012) purports displaying an in-depth knowledge of the

investigated topic and an understanding of the culture of the interviewee helps to negate the differential. Being a former IT consultant, and senior manager (externally to FE) I understood management culture enabling me to view myself as an equal. I also had many years of experience in a variety of FECs in various locations, allowing me to comprehend the FE arena. This helped to address the potential perceived power differential. Both Glas (2021) and Mikecz (2012) state the importance of preparedness of the researcher to demonstrate to the participants, particularly the elite, the serious commitment they have to the research, and this helps to minimise the power imbalance, and establish the researcher as a knowledgeable viable interviewer. Adams (2015) suggests presenting oneself well helps to establish the participant's acceptance of the seriousness of the researcher. I prepared well. I had rehearsed my questions several times with colleagues, my questions were printed with space for notes and on a clipboard for ease of writing, my recording devices were checked and tested, and I presented myself professionally, whether face-to-face or online.

3.13 My personal interview

My interview was conducted following the participants' interviews (see 3.4). I was interviewed by an HE colleague who was an experienced, fully qualified counsellor (MSc in Psychotherapeutic Counselling) and had employed HE lecturers on casual contracts. I found the interview helped me to focus and answer the questions more quickly than if I had written them down, as in writing I would have amended, corrected, changed my grammar and vocabulary, reviewed, added to, and re-written my accounts and experiences. Extracting my raw experiences through interview allowed a more spontaneous, less considered, and more faithful account of how I had experienced casualisation than a written autobiography might have done. During the analysis I was aware that I may have sub-consciously summarised the other participants' perceptions, however, I feel by being interviewed, rather than writing, my responses were more immediate and real to my own perceptions. Buys *et al.* (2022) considered her participatory interviews may have been better placed prior to her participant interviews; however, she also contemplates how this might have then influenced how she conducted the interviews. I also wondered if my interview should have been prior to the participants' yet I do not knowingly think having heard my participants' interviews that this overtly influenced my interview responses. However, to take account of this possibility, in the findings I consciously did not use my

responses, where possible, to summarise the accounts of the other participants to maintain a certain objectivity (see 3.4). Following my interview the data analysis commenced.

3.14 Data analysis and theme development

Fitting with a narrative research, analytical autoethnographical approach was the decision to thematically analyse the interviews. Terry *et al.* (2017) consider TA is a commonly used data analysis method for lived experience research. Joffe (2011) describes a theme as the identification of an obvious or implied motif within the data and that TA enables the presentation of knowledge clearly and methodically. This representation of TA aligns with an interpretive, constructivist design utilising analytical autoethnography with narrative research. Braun and Clarke (2022; 2023) discuss TA as flexible with a variety of approaches, all of which include the development of themes, the use of coding, and an inductive or deductive rationale. The TA approach taken was "Reflexive TA" (Braun and Clarke, 2023, p. 2). This approach necessitated continual reflection to enable intersubjectivity and aid validity and reliability of the analysis (see 3.4). Braun and Clarke (2023) also discuss types of themes, dividing them into topic summaries which merely categorise the data, and secondly, themes which encapsulate an intrinsically unifying idea to interpret the narratives, enveloping the essence and shared experiences of the stories across participants. The latter approach was recommended as good practice for reflexive TA, and this was the approach adopted. Eventually, idiom themes were developed to encapsulate and clarify the participants' shared experiences (see 3.15 and appendices 12-15).

The interviews of all participants were recorded, and these were transcribed using the transcription software in MS Word online. Following the recommendations of Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000), and Savin-Baden and Major (2013) I played the recordings many times, re-reading, correcting and anonymising the transcript, and becoming fully embedded within the narratives. The transcriptions were checked against the recording several times to ensure anonymisation and for data reliability, and the anonymised files were uploaded to NVivo. Simultaneously in the first phase of TA put forward by Braun *et al.* (2023) Content Analysis (Gillham, 2000), was also followed for the development of the analysis of the data. The transcripts were read and clear points within the text were highlighted and categorised.

The analysis was split in two sections, the manager interviews were analysed first, followed by analysis of the lecturer interviews. The six phase reflexive TA approach of Braun *et al.* (2023) was followed. Phase 1 was where familiarisation with the data occurred through the

process of reading, re-reading, transcribing and anonymising. In Phase 2 coding of the transcripts and initial themes were generated, with the themes again reviewed in Phase 3 to further amalgamate the shared meanings interpreted within the data (an example of this is shown in appendix 10). Phase 4 was where the data and themes were reviewed and a set of themes based around idiomatic and figurative language used during the interviews, and other relevant idioms were developed. In Phase 5 the themes were defined, with each theme explained to indicate the meaning of the idiom, and how the idiom was applied to the data interpretation. Details of the phases and the development of the initial themes are shown in appendix 11. Phase 6 was where the findings were written up (see 4).

3.15 Use of idiom themes

The manager and lecturer interviews, and theme coding, were revisited and reviewed after a period of time, and during this review the prevalence of the use of idioms, either by the participants, or by me, to describe the managers' and lecturers' experiences was noticed. It was decided idioms as the themes would help paint a symbolic picture of the interpretation of the clustered data, enabling an in-depth expression of the narratives of the participants.

> *"It is through idioms— and I include those special cases that rhetoricians dignify as tropes, such as metaphor, irony, metonymy, and synecdoche— that the truly creative nature of human expression reveals itself. Idioms are the poetry of daily discourse." (Johnson-Laird, 1993, p. ix).*

Johnson-Laird encapsulates the overarching reasoning for the linguistic use of the idiom in daily life, adding colour and intensity to speech and writing. Wray and Perkins (2000) discuss the metonymic nature of the metaphor suggesting that the substitution of the idiom can compress a complicated idea into a recognised phrase without needing detailed explanation, placing the idiom, lexically, in a shared understanding, interpretation and context of the reader (Erman and Warren, 2000). Savin-Baden and Niekerk (2007) deliberate on the analysis of metonymy and metaphor in narrative research helping the understanding of the participants' conceptions and societal positioning in narrative data analysis. Additionally, Miller (2020) describes the functions of idiom in academic English as being used to condense, paraphrase, define or accentuate concepts. Therefore, idioms could be summarised as lexical shorthand used to describe a subject with multiple complexities which are difficult to express briefly. This interpretation of the idiom corresponds with its use to provide a succinct, easily comprehended, phrase bank in which the complex stories from the analysis of the manager and the lecturer interviews are

constructed. Braun *et al.* (2023) elucidate the naming of the theme should encapsulate the story, mapped against the theme name, therefore idiom seemed appropriate to illuminate the shared tales of experience told within the interviews. Resonating with this approach is the discussion of good thematic practise by Finlay (2021). She demonstrates the use by several researchers of literary descriptive themes exemplifying this: one of the examples being the development of themes within Finlay and Payne's (2013) study of abortion. The theme of "Monstrous Mothering" (Finlay, 2021, p. 109) stemmed from a phrase which occurred to them during their reflection and interpretation of the data, used as an alliterative, thought-provoking theme that instantly conveyed a strong image summarising the descriptive content assigned to it. Comparably, Phillips and Zavros (2013) employ three metaphors as themes when describing the experiences of researchers being participants, and Probst (2016) uses figurative phrases as themes in her research of researchers becoming participants. Finlay (2021), and Braun and Clarke (2023) agree theme choice should represent the research design, and my choice of idiom themes to bring figurative language in illustrating the narrative research and autoethnographical data is fitting.

3.16 Final idiom theme definition

The themes were revisited several times in light of the research questions, however, on review it was decided that nine idiom themes with sub-categories were unmanageable and did not easily map to the research questions. Braun and Clarke (2012) deem between two to six themes are sufficient to enable a rich in-depth analysis although they clarify there is not a fixed formula, and that these themes, of necessity, must relate to the research question (Braun and Clarke, 2023), Finlay (2021) suggests too many themes is an example of weak TA.

Three superordinate themes were developed which directly related to the research questions (see 1.9.3) policy - examining how the policy of casualisation is experienced by the FE manager and lecturer participants (see Table 3.3), working lives - the perceptions of the effect that casualisation has upon their working lives and everyday experiences (see Table 3.4), and power relationships - how they perceive their power relationships are affected by the use of casual contracts (see Table 3.5). The idiom themes were assigned under each superordinate theme.

The generic meaning of the idiom and the application of the idiom within the analysis were added to each theme, and the sub-categories were also explained. This is similar to the approach of Finlay (2021), and Phillip and Zavros (2013) who explained and contextualised

their literary themes and discussed as part of Phase 5 of the data analysis by Braun *et al.* (2023).

3.16.1 Policy themes

Table 3.3 – Detailed explanation of policy idiom themes

Policy superordinate theme	
Idiom theme and sub-categories	**Idiom meaning and application**
Any port in a storm	**Idiom meaning -** In a tricky situation help is taken from wherever it can be sourced. **Idiom application -** The desperate need to staff courses when staff shortages occur.
Rapid appointment of casual lecturers	Rapid appointment of casual lecturing staff when shortfalls occur in course delivery.
Relief to have lecturing staff	Feeling of relief when casual lecturers are appointed to vacant roles, particularly when there are staffing challenges.
Balance the books	**Idiom meaning -** To ensure that income does not exceed expenditure. **Idiom application -** Financial considerations in FE settings leading to casualisation.
Casual labour is inexpensive	Lower expense costs to the FE organisation in light of the employment of casual staff: Paying lecturers term-time-only, solely for hours worked or for course duration, easily disposable therefore no redundancy. In terms of agency staff the HR, employee related costs covered by the Agency.
FE funding	Government policies driving FE colleges to save money by the use of casualisation of lecturing staff.
Negative financial implications for the college	The negative implications that the utilisation of casual lecturers can financially cause to the FE colleges.
Try before you buy	**Idiom meaning -** To test something out before committing. **Idiom application -** The casual lecturer testing or being tested before committing to or being offered a contract in an FE setting, and the use of casual lecturing on new, additional or temporary courses.
Lecturer proving themselves	Where a casual lecturer proves themselves worthy of a permanent job to the FE setting, or where the casual lecturer tests out lecturing to ascertain if they want to enter the teaching profession or tests out the FE setting to see if they wish to work there.
Manager testing the water	Where the manager/FE college trials the casual lecturer (either intentionally, or unintentionally) as part of the permanent recruitment process.
Uncertainty over course viability	Using casual lecturers when a new courses/modules/curriculum area are being run prior to certainty over their continuation in the future.

Goose and golden eggs	**Idiom meaning -** Killing the goose that lays the golden eggs is an idiom for myopic destruction of something valuable, or the motivation of greed driving the destruction of that which creates money. **Idiom application -** The examination of how the use of casualisation can be both detrimental or beneficial to an FE organisation, and how a move towards the removal of casualisation may be seen as beneficial.
Casual industry experienced lecturers	Benefits of using casual lecturers with specialist or industrial experience.
Current part-time or casual lecturers offered more hours first	The use of known casual lecturers or current fractional lecturers when additional teaching is identified.
Moving away from casualisation	Decasualisation - The move to increase permanent, and permanent variable staff and to move away from using casual lecturing staff.

3.16.2 Working lives themes

Table 3.4 – Detailed explanation of working lives idiom themes

Working lives superordinate theme	
Idiom theme and sub-categories	**Idiom meaning and application**
Chains and weak links	**Idiom meaning -** A chain is only as strong as its weakest link, meaning that if one link fails, the whole chain will. **Idiom application -** The weak link refers to the actual or anticipated future issues associated with the use of casual lecturers, and how they integrate, in the organisation.
Department and curriculum consequences	The consequences of casual lecturer employment on Departments; potential conflicts with permanent staff over curriculum planning and work allocation.
Managerial consequences	The consequences for managers of the use of casual lecturers. These include managerial concern for casual lecturers' well-being, integration and workload allocation, and additional workload for managers.
Quality concerns about casual lecturers	Concerns over competence of casual lecturers and the consequences that this can have on the College.
Recruitment and retention difficulties	Difficulties in retaining casual lecturers, and recruitment and attrition challenges in FE settings.
Student educational consequences	The consequences of using casual lecturers on student performance and achievement.
I know what it's like	**Idiom meaning -** Empathising with someone due to familiarity with a similar situation.

	Idiom application - The managers drawing upon their own experiences of being employed on casual contracts and empathising with the casual lecturers they employ.
Living on a knife edge	**Idiom meaning -** The situation is unbalanced and uncertain. **Idiom application -** This theme explores the precarity in which the casual lecturer is perceived to be in by the manager.
Casual contract financial instability	The difficulties that the casual lecturer faces financially.
Casual contract job insecurity	The uncertainty and insecurity that the casual lecturer faces.
Multiple employments and or multiple courses	When a casual lecturer has to work in different settings and or teach multiple disciplines.
Resentment of casual situation	The resentment towards the employer or permanent colleagues felt by the casual lecturer.

3.16.3 Power relationships themes

Table 3.5 – Detailed explanation of power relationships idiom themes

Power relationships superordinate theme	
Idiom theme and sub-categories	**Idiom meaning and application**
Carrots and sticks	**Idiom meaning -** Using reward and punishment to control. **Idiom application –** The examination of how manipulation is used on casual lecturers – either a potential permanent contract or loss of teaching hours. Although this is encompassed in "**Try before you buy**" it explores a more cynical use of the hopes and fears of the casual lecturer.
Dangling the carrot	How if the casual lecturer works hard, they may be rewarded with a permanent contract.
Using the stick	How if the casual lecturer refuses work they may not be offered teaching hours.
The power is in their hands	**Idiom meaning -** It is in your possession or control. **Idiom application -** The exploration of the power that the casual contract brings to both the manager and the lecturer.
Casual lecturer power	The power that casualisation affords to the lecturer.
Manager power	The power that casualisation affords to the lecturer.

3.17 Narration of the data

When re-writing and interpreting the experiences I was conscious of the privilege afforded to me. Anyan (2013) describes this as a particular privilege and, by continual reflexivity, following Vicary and Jones' (2017) example, it was important to carefully loop circularly through writing, re-writing, reflecting and research literature (Ball, 2021) to ensure the lived experience of each participant was told. Each participant's data were individually re-written as a narrative report under the groupings of policy, working lives, and power relationships utilising idiom themes within each grouping (examples are given in appendices 16-17). To enable analysis and comparison of the managers' narratives, and separately, the lecturers', each narrative report was collated into their respective spreadsheet with a separate worksheet for each grouping, including background and conclusions (see appendices 18-19).

3.18 Research design and methodology - Reflection and summary

The qualitative approach using interpretive constructivism, with autoethnography and narrative research was appropriate for the data collection and analysis. Qualitative research uses small sample sizes to provide rich, intensive and in-depth data and a larger sample size of managers and lecturers may have produced a wider variety of responses. However, having recruited the full range of the managerial FE hierarchy afforded a full range of responses from the various echelons within FE, and the variety of FECs from which both the managers and the lecturers had been or were employed in also gave a broad range of FE experience. This captured many of the pros and cons of the use of casualisation in FE, and some surprising perceptions were also captured. The use of idiom themes, although they occupied a great deal of time in development, portray the emotional depth of the data. Being conscious of my presence in the research created difficulties in maintaining an intersubjectivity, but by using my data to support, rather than exemplify the participant data helped. I also reflected continually during the process and the thematic development and write up.

3.19 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the qualitative approach using interpretive constructivist research paradigm, with autoethnography and narrative research. Reflexivity and positionality, ethical considerations, participant anonymity, and reliability and validity have been considered. The methodology and methods of sample recruitment and population,

arranging the interview, and use of semi-structured interviews to capture the data and the development of the themes using TA to analyse the data have been discussed, and reflected upon. The next chapter presents the findings from the manager and the lecturer interviews, grouping them within the superordinate themes of policy, working lives and power relationships, under the idiom themes.

4 Findings and analysis

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the findings and analysis are discussed, divided into three sections which reflect the overarching superordinate themes of policy, working lives and power relationships. As detailed in the methodology, (see 3.14) the participants' responses were analysed in their separate groupings of manager and lecturer, the individual findings for each participant group were collated under each superordinate theme of policy, working lives and power relationships, and the **idiom themes** (see Appendix 13-15) became part of the narrative and are shown in bold – when an idiom theme is introduced a definition of its generic meaning and application is given, in an indented box, to aid clarity.

> *Example of **idiom theme** introduction - with a definition of its generic meaning and application.*

In each section the manager and the lecturer findings are discussed and compared. The participants have been anonymised (see 3.5). None of the lecturer participants were employed or managed by the manager participants to negate ethical considerations of any direct working life or relationship comparison of the manager or lecturer viewpoints (see 3.4). Finally, each section is summarised.

4.2 Backgrounds of the participants

The managers had a wide range of experience with between 16 to over 30 years' service in publicly funded English FE settings (see 3.9), and between eight to more than 20 years of managerial experience. They represented the managerial hierarchy of FECs: Curriculum Manager (MPB), Head of Department (MPA), Head of Faculty (MPE), Deputy Principal (MPD), Principal and Chief Executive (MPC). With their combined experienced they had lectured in and/or managed the full range of the FE curriculum, student age groups and academic qualification levels, and had employed and managed lecturers on the entire array of casual contracts (see appendix 1). MPC and MPD were currently working in the same FEC, MPA, MPB and MPE worked in separate FECs. Three of the managers remained in FE, one had left FE less than a year before the interview, and the remaining manager had left approximately seven years prior to the interview. A surprising finding was they had all begun their FE careers on casual contracts, so **they knew what it's like**, to differing degrees,

and this appeared to influence their views. The managers appear to fit into the Standings' (2018) precariat grouping of the salariat (see 2.1).

> ***I know what it's like*** *is an idiom meaning to empathise with someone due to familiarity with a similar situation. In this thesis it shows the managers drawing upon their own experiences of being employed on casual contracts and empathising with the casual lecturers (see appendix 14).*

The lecturers had between eight to 23 plus years' experience and their combined casual employments represented the full range of publicly funded English FE settings (see appendix 2), and FE casual contract types (see appendix 1). None of the lecturers were employed by or worked for the manager participants (see 3.9.2). They had lectured in many differing subject areas to the whole spectrum of student age groups and academic qualification levels. All the lecturers had experience of lecturing in subjects or subject levels in which they were either not qualified in or employed to teach on. Similar to the managers, four of the lecturers had entered FE on casual contracts, with LPA initially entering FE in an OPFC on a permanent contract, although had been subsequently employed on casual contracts. The lecturers, within one year of the interview, had been or were still employed on FE casual contracts. Three of the lecturers had left the sector, of the remaining two lecturers one was actively seeking employment externally to FE, and the other was seeking a full-time permanent role in either FE or out of the sector. According to Standing's (2018) precariat (see 2.1) the lecturer participants could fit into the grouping of the supplicants - progressives.

4.3 FE employment contract terminology

For clarity the contract terminology in the findings has been standardised.

"Permanent variable-hours" refers to a contract with a contracted minimum number of hours, paid as an FTE contract including holiday pay, and the same terms and conditions as "permanent full-time" lecturers. The teaching hours can be raised or lowered to the minimum as needed. Permanent part-time is used to refer to an FTE contract where the hours are fixed and non-variable.

"Term-time-only variable-hours" refers to a contract which has contracted minimum hours "permanent zero-hours" is used for a permanent contract with no specified hours. These contracts exclude paid holiday apart from an uplift per hour taught. "Zero-hours" refers to

a permanent or a temporary zero-hours contract, including agency and supply. “Fixed-term” is used for a contract with a specified end date.

4.4 Policy findings

Casualisation was ascribed, by the managers and the lecturers, to the historical and continuing FE governmental policy towards funding. All the managers and four of the lecturers commenced their FE careers on casual contracts in different decades from the 1990s to 2010s, tallying with Mather, Worral and Seifert’s (2009) (see 2.3.2) findings of the implementation of the new contract embedding casualisation into FE employment following incorporation. Their stories resonate with Gleeson, Davies and Wheeler’s (2005) study (see 2.3.1) which details casualisation as an undeclared interview process and career route into FE lecturing. The managers, to differing degrees, thought moving away from zero-hours or term-time-only variable-hours casualisation (decasualisation) to permanent, or permanent variable-hours was potentially a better policy for FE, helping to provide stability for the FEC, themselves and their departments, students’ learning and outcomes, and giving the lecturers employment stability and financial security. Similarities can be drawn between the attitudes towards the effects of decasualisation expressed by the managers and those described as early as 2005 in *The Foster Report* (2005) (see 2.3.2). However, they all recognised a need for casualisation. MPC, as Principal and Chief Executive, and MPD, as their Deputy Principal and Deputy Chief Executive, had the power (see 4.6.2) to introduce a policy of decasualisation, employing what would have been zero-hours lecturers, and converting current zero-hours lecturers, to permanent or permanent variable-hours.

The lecturers predominantly appeared to agree with the managers, believing that external Government policy, and continuing internal policies of the FECs’ management, had created a scenario of financial difficulties for FECs leading to the need to employ inexpensive lecturers. All the lecturers mentioned casualisation enabled ease of reduction, revocation or extension of lecturing hours, without necessitating expensive and time-consuming HR statutory employment processes afforded to permanent employees. The lecturers thought the policy of casualisation was used for role flexibility, and to further lessen employment costs by the expectation of the casual lecturer performing additional unremunerated work. Intermutually, they believed casualisation as a policy affected the FECs negatively considering this contributed to challenges in lecturer recruitment and retention leading to

additional costs, concurring with Tully (2023) when examining reasons for FE lecturer retention and recruitment issues (see 2.4).

4.4.1 Balancing the books

> ***Balancing the books*** *is an idiom meaning to ensure income does not exceed expenditure. In this thesis it depicts the positives and negatives of financial considerations in FECs leading to casualisation (see appendix 13).*

The challenges of governmental FE funding policy, competing for students, and the poor financial position of FE, which has been widely documented (O'Leary and Rami, 2017; Belfield, Farquharson and Sibieta, 2018; Augur, 2019; Sibieta and Tahir, 2021; Lewis and Bolton, 2023; Drayton *et al*., 2023) has made it difficult for FECs to **balance the books**, ensuring that income matches expenditure, with the seriousness of the financial situation of many colleges partially leading to the ending of incorporation and GFECs returning to public control (DfE, 2022a) (see 2.3.3). The managers and lecturers regarded **balancing the books** to be the main factor influencing the policy of casualisation. MPA, discussing the influence of government on FE financial issues and the need for them to employ casual lecturers stated:

> *FE, as we know, is the most underfunded sector of the sort of education landscape in the UK and [zero-hours] lecturers are cheap.*

MPE concurred, "logic would tell you that from the business side you're going to put the zero in." MPA also stated the casual lecturers felt "disposable." MPC similarly agreed, implicitly referencing government financial policy when mentioning the limitations in the renumeration they could give to their lecturers, however, they displayed pragmatism, accepting they had to work within the financial policies set. They did, however, acknowledge using casual staff could help **balance the books**, purporting it could be a less expensive option than employing a permanent lecturer:

> *sometimes it can be cheaper just to bring people in as and when you need … it fills gaps … financially it has the benefits because it's short, sharp.*

MPB contemplated the use of agency lecturers for internal departmental budgetary purposes, and for the FECs' general costs, discussing the differing cost centres agency staff would be allocated to, and the cost-savings in obligatory employment terms and conditions for the FECs:

> *Agency staff come out of a different cost centre to permanent staff … employing agency staff, it's not then accruing pension and National Insurance contribution obligations [to the FEC].*

Reciprocally, the lecturers thought financial consideration of **balancing the books** was the main casualisation policy driver, currently and historically. They perceived it enabled FECs to reduce renumeration, and terms and conditions of casual lecturers, and increase their expected (unpaid) workload. All the lecturers understood the difficult financial position of the FECs due to Government funding, with LPB voicing their opinions:

> *The financial situation … and in some colleges - it's absolutely dire and they have to try and cut costs wherever they can.*

However, the knowledge of the financial challenges faced by the FECs did not appear to assuage the lecturers' difficulties with the lower pay and conditions they found themselves in (see 4.5.1). I (LPE) detailing when first commencing on a zero-hours FE lecturing role in the early 1990s, at the start of FE incorporation and the implementation of the new contracts, demonstrated the effect the pay changes had:

> *[my pay] worked out at potentially half of what my colleagues were earning because it was one of the brand new [zero-hours] contracts … [The FECs were] offering very low rates of pay as well to casual contracts - because they can.*

Being able to terminate contracts easily when student numbers decreased, coupled with the lack of sickness and holiday pay associated with zero-hours or term-time-only variable contracts, was also viewed by the lecturers as one of the main cost-cutting policy reasons for the continued use of casualisation. LPA, echoing the managers' views, thought the FECs used casual lecturers as they were "cheap to employ and easy to get rid of." LPA had experienced both these aspects when employed on rolling fixed-term contracts:

> *because if the funding was pulled … they could have got rid of me, [and] even though I was on teachers' pay and conditions. It was on … a fixed payment*

LPB further agreed casualisation enabled the FECs to save money by employing casual lecturers term-time-only, stating:

> *It's all to do with the budget, it's all to do with funding. They don't have to pay you the summer holidays … if you're working as a [term-time-only variable-hours] member of staff … you get 34 or 36 weeks paid [per year]*

with LPC concurring:

> *[the FECs] were probably trying to cut costs by not paying for holidays and when they try to start a new class somewhere and no one would come… it's a case of if there's no work they don't have to pay you, it's a money thing isn't it from their point of view?*

LPB discussed the use of casualisation enabled the FECs to remove lecturers easily, stating their belief of senior management dehumanising casual lecturers:

> *The senior managers [see you] as a number. They really do think you're just hours and money and it all works out to the cost, doesn't it? Why would they pay us?... it makes sense for the college not to have to pay a full-time permanent salary when they don't know the hours that are coming.*

LPD summarised the shared views of the lecturers regarding the ease of dismissal:

> *If they decide one day that I'm not a good teacher, they don't have to go through any rigmarole … any HR procedures. They can pretend equally that they are still employing me and that they may call me in the future because that saves a lot of social awkwardness and HR procedures … 'you have a [permanent term-time-only zero-hours] contract with us, so you know, you're still a member of staff'.*

Another financial benefit of a policy of casualisation was thought to be the unremunerated additional work casual lecturers performed. The managers lower in the managerial hierarchy, MPA, MPB and MPE voiced this opinion, but MPC and MPD, at the highest points in the hierarchy did not. An example given by MPA echoes MPE's and MPB's thoughts:

> *[the casual lecturers were] putting in a load of work, but not getting paid for it, 'cause they're just getting paid for being in the classroom.*

This aspect of casualisation was similarly experienced by a group of newly qualified casual Irish FE lecturers identified in a study by O'Neill and Fitzsimons (2020), and in various studies of casual HE lecturers (Lopes and Dewan, 2014; Loveday, 2018b; Leathwood and Read, 2020) (see 2.6).The lecturer participants agreed, considering casualisation led them to perform unpaid work including marking, moderation and compulsory training, or work above the grade on which they were being paid, and they seemed to deem this a deliberate FEC policy. LPB discussed how they had been "working 55 hours a week and … getting paid for 21 teaching hours" to complete their work. LPB detailed an assumption by management that the casual lecturers were contracted to perform all work related to the role, regardless of the hours paid:

> *for every hour that you're paid to teach, [you] get half hour [pay for] administration. You've got to do all your preparation, all the paperwork*

and everything as part of that and attend meetings as well … it's not realistic at all.

The additional work included personal development and training time, covering classes, extra marking and planning. LPB related their experience of one manager's attitude:

[the manager said] that there was some training … that we needed to do, but we weren't allocated any time to do that, 'cause [the trainer would] come in for two days over the summer to do this training [when we weren't paid to be in]. We had to catch up watching the videos - e-learning, but we weren't given any time to do that e-learning… We weren't paid because what they do is they say you need to fit it in as part of your [administrative time].

LPA had been employed, and remunerated, on a tutoring scale to work with either small numbers of students or on a one-one basis, but then was told to teach full lectures, not on a lecturer's pay scale: They stated:

[I was] then made to lecture to full classes. Whereas I wasn't actually doing what my contract said, because I was teaching all classes.

Additionally, LPC considered FECs saved money as the process of claiming time worked was "overly complicated":

[The FECs] must owe people thousands of unclaimed stuff because people either missed it off or didn't realise they could claim for it and things like that … you had to record all your classes down and the times and then your travel time.

Although this was seen as a way for the FEC to **balance the books**, in contrast, the managers and the lecturers all appeared to believe that casualisation could lead to financial disbenefits for the FECs. From the managerial viewpoint MPC and MPD argued their policy of decasualisation and use of permanent variable-hours enabled better budgetary and financial control. MPC stated:

[using permanent variable-hours lecturers] helps us to forecast what our pay bill is going to be over a year ... whereas with [zero-hours] … there have been times … where actually your [zero-hours] spend is going way over during the year, whereas if you'd have put them on a [permanent variable-hours] contract, you wouldn't have that. You'd have known how much they were going to be paid all through the year, so it's easier to manage as well.

The managers considered utilisation of external casual lecturers, particularly agency staff, could be costly, similar to the views expressed by participants in Runge, Hudson-Sharp and

Rolfe's study of headteachers (2017) (see 2.6), and was not always the best option. MPE exemplified this view of the financial costs of recruitment:

> *that situation doesn't work for the college because we've gotta go out and find somebody else at a … financial cost [to the College], and time and effort.*

One of the lecturers agreed with the expense of agency staff. LPA stated the agencies, "seemed [to have] set the fee quite high for lecturers."

MPB expressed an additional viewpoint on the reasoning for the increased need for casualisation when discussing the changes they had witnessed in the policy of FE work allocation. Over MPB's FE career they had seen work allocation policy change from under allocation of teaching hours to enable lecturers to perform extra duties or cover classes for sick or absent colleagues, to a policy of full utilisation of lecturers' yearly teaching hours. They illustrated this issue:

> *We used to have what we used to call 'slack' in the timetable. People had a bit of spare capacity, to be able to step in in an emergency. And that, in my view, used to constitute a much more reliable emergency measure than calling on agency staff because of stability.*

This, MPB believed, was part of the drive towards what they perceived as an organisational focus switch in policy in FE, from the primary focus being on the student experience and outcomes, to it shifting to a **balancing the books** scenario of finances and processes. MPB explained their view:

> *When I first went into FE we had a very learner-centred focus. And if I went to management with a problem I would be told, 'sort it and put the paperwork in place afterwards.' So, the needs of the learner were then paramount, and as time went by, it seems that the needs of process have subsumed the needs of the learner… By the time I left that College, the needs of the learners had been subjugated to the requirements of process and filthy lucre.*

Balancing the books was perceived by the managers and the lecturers as the driving force behind a policy of casualisation, induced by government FE funding policy, with the FE workforce stretched to capacity potentially creating the need for **any port in a storm** staffing requirements.

4.4.2 Any port in a storm

> ***Any port in a storm*** *is an idiom meaning in a tricky situation help is taken from wherever it can be sourced. In this thesis the idiom conceptualises the desperate need to staff courses when staff shortages occur (see appendix 13).*

One of the policy reasons for casualisation was **any port in a storm**, where there was a sudden need to staff courses due to lecturer sickness or absence, retention issues, unexpectedly high student numbers necessitating extra classes, or trialling a new course. When MPA accepted the role of Head of Department they rapidly needed to employ multiple zero-hours lecturers. It was a matter of **any port in a storm** for MPA, and they felt they had no choice over the contract type, stating:

> *[I was] relieved to have got staff in front of the students because the departments were in a pickle, so just to have lecturers in front of students was a good thing, regardless of the quality of the casual lecturer … you'll take anyone you can get, rightly or wrongly … if someone says that's going to be a part-time member of staff that's hourly-paid or casual, you'll take it.*

MPC, MPB and MPD expressed serious concerns over the use of external casual lecturers, and their policy was to avoid their use, citing stories of challenging experiences, particularly with agency lecturers. They thought they were expensive, unreliable and lacking knowledge in their supposed subject area, deeming they would need the desperation of **any port in a storm** to employ them. MPB described their experiences of agency staff as "horrendous", and MPC was "not a big fan of agencies … [using them] … when we're desperate." MPD concurred explaining it is

> *the **last port of call** really to need to go to an agency to cover a class, because there's lots of things that we try to do first.*

MPB, MPC and MPD's experiences of and attitude towards agency lecturers echo Runge, Hudson-Sharp and Rolfe's (2017) conclusions in their report on agency teachers in schools, where the headteachers express similar concerns relating to the quality and reliability of agency teachers, equally stated by Hanley and Orr's (2019) findings in their investigation of FE lecturer recruitment (see 2.6). The effects of agency and casual staff upon the working lives of the managers and their departments is explored more fully in 4.5.2.

MPB, MPC, MPD and MPE deliberated on their preferred policy of increasing or decreasing lecturing hours of directly employed variable-hours lecturers in preference to employing **any port in a storm** casual lecturers when the business needs changed. Summarising MPE stated:

> *We would first want to go straight to the zero-hours or [permanent variable-hours] lecturers and say are you interested in any additional hours? … [if not] we think of another option.*

The lecturers narrated feeling of being **any port in a storm**, when asked, at short notice, to cover subjects they were not qualified in. I (LPE) discussed when I had been contracted on agency, or directly by the FECs on zero-hours contracts to cover sickness absence, or staffing shortages, and had also been asked to cover subjects, often at Level 3, in which I had no experience, "I was teaching GCSE and A Level, quite a wide base … in subject areas I didn't know." Similarly, LPD commented:

> *[I was asked to teach] an additional subject that I did not know, so two extra subjects for which I was not qualified [and this] apparently didn't matter as [the FEC] were desperate.*

However, LPC when asked to be **any port in a storm** teaching a curriculum area which they did not know discussed how this was positive for themselves, and potentially for the FEC, as LPC found they enjoyed teaching the curriculum area and student body in comparison to their specialist area, realising this was the area in which they would like to remain (see also 4.4.3):

> *I was less keen on the GCSE and A level [in my specialist area]. Although that's what I trained in, a …. teacher… and the [new curriculum area] I absolutely loved and that's what I wanted to do so that I could do that all day long.*

Any port in a storm was seen by the managers as essential in certain urgent circumstances. MPA, expressed relief at any lecturer being put in front of classes as they were desperate to staff courses. The lecturers appeared to accept being asked to teach subjects or curriculum areas in which they were not qualified as an expected part of casualisation (see 4.5.1). As a policy **any port is a storm** could be due to inadequate staffing levels, and difficulties in workforce planning in the FECs caused by the reduction in and changes to FE funding. **Any port in a storm** could also lead to a **try before you buy**, a seemingly accepted and embedded casualisation policy allowing the manager to test to see if the casual lecturer would fit with their FEC and lecturing requirements, and, for the lecturer, as positively demonstrated by LPC, to see if the subject area or the FEC suited them.

4.4.3 Try before you buy

> ***Try before you buy*** *is an idiom which means testing something before committing to buying it. In this thesis, this conceptualises the casual lecturer testing or being tested before committing to or being offered a contract, and the use of casual lecturing on new, additional or temporary courses (see appendix 13).*

Try before you buy was a policy applied to see if a course would continue prior to permanently staffing it, or to test the casual lecturer to see if they were suitable; it was also seen as a way for the lecturer to try lecturing, or to test if the FEC was somewhere they wished to work. The lecturers and managers had all, at one stage in their FE employment, used this as a way into an FE career. The managers collectively contemplated a policy of using casual lecturers to **try before you buy** (see 4.6.1). MPB expressed this as firstly to see if the course would continue, and secondly to assess if the casual lecturer was employable:

> *if we had additional courses … If it was a foot in the water, kind of thing. And until such time as the college had realised that the courses were going to be financially viable for them, and then they might consider offering a permanent contract to the people who were doing that teaching.*

and MPE summarised the thoughts of all the managers expounding:

> *[lecturers] come in on casual contracts … and it's a really good stepping stone for them. They kind of come in and they prove themselves and then they get the full-time post.*

MPC and MPD believed it was a reciprocal, beneficial arrangement for the lecturer, particularly from industry, as voiced by MPC "a **test and try,** for both parties", providing the lecturers with an opportunity to ascertain if they enjoyed lecturing, and liked the FEC. This shared view was expressed by MPD:

> *the benefit for that individual to try out the role of a teacher because they are industry experts, not teachers, so it's highly different skills … for some, that works out really well, that sort of* ***try before you buy*** *or try before you really jump in at the deep end*

MPC believed this could provide the lecturer with additional personal development opportunities:

> *They could be offered the opportunity to then train … become qualified if that's what they want to do…. [a] lot of our lecturers work their way up from being [casual] staff.*

Another benefit for the lecturer, perceived by MPC, was they could decide if the FEC was where they wanted to work. MPC voiced this from the lecturer's point of view purporting the lecturer might think, "I don't want to sign a permanent contract because I'm not sure yet."

MPB and MPE referenced student lecturers as a **try before you buy**, as illustrated by MPB:

> *[it could be] an opportunity to grow our own. And so, if a student subsequently applied for a job, then they came as a 'known quantity' rather than an 'unknown quantity.'*

MPA did not see **try before you buy** as beneficial for the casual lecturers. Developed from their own **knowing what it's like** experiences, they aired the opinion it was a **carrot and stick** policy discussing the potential offer of a job as a purposeful design to extract more unpaid work from the casual lecturer (discussed further in 4.6.1).

The shared position of MPB, MPC, MPD and MPE, and the opposing perspective of MPA, of the intent of **try before you buy** coincides with the managers' own stories of their entry into FE, and as stated previously, with Gleeson, Davies and Wheeler's (2005, p. 450) contention of casualisation being used for the "long interview." Of interest is the article was published in 2005, and the manager interviews took place in 2022/2023 indicating this as an embedded and extant recruitment policy.

For the lecturers **try before you buy** was seen by myself and LPC as the only way into an FE career, I discussed how, "*[FE was]* where I saw my career going and the only way that I could get into it was on zero-hours," and LPC, on discussing their first zero-hours contracts at two FECs, related:

> *It did at least give me a start and some experience in the area that I wanted to be in, it meant that I was able to gain experience … I wouldn't have got started in doing what I wanted to do without it.*

The "long interview" (Gleeson, Davies and Wheeler, 2005, p. 450) and **try before you buy** aspect of casualisation was demonstrated by the lecturers who remained on casual contracts for extended periods of time: LPA for over two years, LPB still, after approximately 10 years, at the time of the interview, remaining on a casual contract for a proportion of their FE employment, LPC with a casual, and part-time permanent contract up to the time they left FE, LPD becoming permanent after approximately 16 years but still working an additional zero-hours FE lecturing position at an OPFC , and myself on casual

contracts for over 13 years out of 15 plus years in FE. This led to dissatisfaction of the lecturers, and the desire to leave the sector for permanent employment.

4.4.4 Don't kill the goose that lays the golden eggs

> *An idiom for the myopic destruction of something valuable, or the motivation of greed driving the destruction of that which creates money. In this thesis it conceptualises how casualisation can be detrimental and/or beneficial to FECs (see Appendix 13).*

A move towards decasualisation to retain known effective lecturers was recognised by all the managers, to a greater or lesser extent, as a way on **not killing the goose that laid the golden eggs**. The perceived benefits of retaining casual lecturers familiar with the FEC were the lecturers knew the systems and processes, and the curriculum, provided continuity for the students which could increase student outcomes and satisfaction (influencing the amount of year in year funding). The lecturers were also more likely to display loyalty, helping retention. From the theoretical framework (see 2.9.2) this shows a reversal of the dependent organisation described by Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) to a Mechanic's (1962) dependent relationship. MPB's account summarised the views expressed by the managers:

> *The benefits to the FEC of permanent [variable-hours] staff was … familiarity with systems and processes. Because those staff are permanent staff they provide some continuity for the students, and that's particularly important in cases where you might take your learners … on a Level 2 programme at 16. Because they hadn't got the GCSE requirements and then the students know those staff as they go on to Level 3 programmes and potentially then onto HE in FE.*

The managers also considered a permanent (variable-hours or otherwise) lecturer would be more loyal to the organisation as they would not have the constant worry of future financial or employment issues. MPB illustrated:

> *Because you have somebody who is a permanent employee, they are more likely to display goodwill towards the organisation because they know that, you know, within the bounds of reasonableness, the job is there next year, it's permanent. It's not threatening their future financially.*

They all seemed to believe decasualisation to permanent or permanent variable-hours increased productivity enabling the FEC and departments to function effectively for the good of both the staff, the students, and teaching and learning. The shared views were exemplified by MPA:

> *If you have permanent staff then you can involve them in the whole way the department functions, … a department meeting … students at risk …, or you've got meetings with parents, or parents' evening.*

The lecturers agreed, perceiving casualisation led to a lack of loyalty (see also 4.5.2). LPC summarised the lecturers' view:

> *[casual contracts have] more downsides than up really. If you take money out of it you're left with a whole lot of downsides for them, and the [other lecturer] staff members … because it's, it's not good for them to not have a committed workforce.*

In contrast, MPE, passively seemed to accept the unstated casual employment policy of their FECs as culturally embedded and historic. They appeared to feel they had limited power to change this, their apparent powerlessness concurring with the Foucauldian description expounded in Perryman *et al.* (2017) which discusses power being permeated downwards, with the subject acceptant and acquiescent in the process. The other managers did not seem to like their powerlessness, and their ability to effect change appeared to be dictated by their position within the managerial hierarchy (see 4.6). However, MPE, in contradiction to their acceptance of their FEC's implicit casual employment policy, considered the disadvantages of casualisation, particularly when related to work allocation, citing an example where they had had difficulties sharing lecturing hours between permanent and casual lecturers, they stated:

> *if everyone was full-time you wouldn't have a problem. You could actually divvy the work out really fairly.*

Both the managers and lecturers discussed the **goose and golden eggs** issue of casualisation as a causal effect of lecturer attrition which increased difficulties at a time when FE lecturer retention and recruitment problems were growing (DfE, 2021). The managers debated how casual lecturers would not stay if there was the possibility of better renumeration, or a permanent contract. MPA deliberated on the difficulties:

> *So you've got staff that are constantly looking for something that's going to be permanent. Because why would you put yourself through that year in year out and not have any money over the summer? Why would you do it - so constantly revolving door of staff. Staff didn't stay.*

and MPC worried about there being "a real issue with recruitment, and people will move for tiny sums of money." MPE was the only manager mentioning retention and recruitment issues of shortage-subject lecturers stating "good [specific shortage-subject lecturers] are very difficult to come by."

MPC's account summarised the views of the managers:

> *that goes hand in hand with doing the right thing by people which most of the time is permanent variable-hours contracts rather than keeping them on zero-hours. Makes them feel part of it.*

MPC and MPD debated a key to **not killing the goose that laid the golden eggs** by retaining lecturers was to create a good, supportive working environment. MPC summarised this "culture around our people" where:

> *people want to work at the college, a nice culture where they're supported, where we give them opportunities, where you know, all of this stuff you'd want from a good employer.*

The lecturers concurred, discussing working condition policies as being a **goose and golden eggs** issue. LPA related how the FECs were "not retaining … good staff … there are some good staff that I know have left from the (casual) contract" and LPD agreed having witnessed this "several times over," and that they themselves had "also tried many times" to leave due to casualisation. LPC summarised:

> *If they get offered a better contract at another college they're going to go and they're not going to think twice. Because the bottom line is most people … prefer to have a regular contract.*

The lecturers also thought casualisation could **kill the goose that laid the golden eggs** because of the long-term effect it had upon their attitude towards FE in general, and the low pay they received. LPA, an experienced shortage-subject lecturer, had been employed on rolling fixed-term contracts. They had accepted a permanent role externally to FE as they could not face waiting to see if their contract would be renewed again:

> *I had already found a permanent job elsewhere by then, because I just couldn't go through [waiting to see if my contract would be renewed] a third time.*

The FEC belatedly offered LPA a permanent contract, but LPA left FE completely, disheartened by repeated casualisation and desiring better pay. I (LPE) stated at one stage had "left education completely because I was sick of not being able to land a permanent position", and even though I returned, eventually I left FE for HE. Being on casual contracts in FECs for such an extended period had also contributed to LPD's view and commitment to FE, and even though they were now employed permanently they stated:

> *It remains my aim to get out of the college and go work in higher education if I can.*

Having been employed on casual contracts for approximately 16 years, LPB, who was on a mix of permanent part-time FTE and term-time-only variable-hours was looking for a permanent role either in FE or externally. LPC had already left FE for HE. The lecturers employment intentions resonated with Odejimi and Ekpenyong (2019) assertion of FE lecturers wishing to move to HE.

4.4.5 Policy summary

The managers and the lecturers perceived government FE funding policies, and the need to **balance the books** was the impetus for the policy of casualisation within FE. This created year on year instability causing difficulties in workforce planning, coupled with the need to staff new courses, or close courses when student numbers fell. The lack of recruitment, the rise in lecturer attrition, and the full capacity of lecturers' teaching timetables helped to **any port in a storm** being used to staff courses when lecturers left, were ill, or new courses were trialled, and all the lecturers (and some of the managers) narrated stories of teaching subjects or levels they had little experience in. All participants had experienced a **try before you buy** "long interview process" (Gleeson, Davies and Wheeler, 2005) as an entry point into FE, and the managers, bar one, thought it was a good policy. Finally, the participants appeared to believe that casualisation was a **killing the golden goose** issue, causing the loss of lecturing staff. This could lead to poorer student achievement and retention, therefore affecting year-on-year funding.

4.5 Working lives findings

This section examines the perceptions of the participants of the effect casualisation had upon their working lives. The **living on a knife edge** precarity of financial and job insecurities, stress and well-being issues, feelings of inequality, and a perception of high work demands for low renumeration created residual resentment and a lack of self-worth expressed by the casual lecturers. The managers' early career experiences of casualisation before gaining permanent FE employment enabled them to **know what it's like** in terms of working and personal life consequences of casualisation. Universally, the managers told stories of challenges when managing casual lecturers, describing **weak links in the chain** when detailing the working life consequences for themselves, their permanent lecturers, and for the students. The lecturers' responses resonated with the managers, identifying similar **weak links** - they felt casualisation caused difficult working lives and relationships, leading to lack of commitment and loyalty, with the lecturer able to withdraw their labour

if they chose. The lecturers perceived this as challenging for the managers, other lecturers, and the students.

4.5.1 Living on a knife edge

> *This idiom portrays an unbalanced or uncertain situation. In this thesis it explores the precarity of the casual lecturer role as perceived by the lecturers and the managers (see appendix 14).*

The lecturers agreed they were **living on a knife edge** whilst being employed casually. Financial and job instability, professional conflict, mental health, implied subjugation and the lack of the ability to speak out due to the nature of what LPD summarised as "the terrible *[casual]* contract" impacted all aspects of their personal and working lives and working relationships. The precarity of financial and job insecurity of casualisation in FE is discussed in the relevant literature (O'Leary and Rami, 2017; UCU, 2019a; O'Neill and Fitzsimons, 2020; Fitzsimons, Henry and O'Neill, 2022), although this is sparse in comparison to the literature surrounding the effects of casualisation in HE (see 2.8).

Casualisation for the lecturers created a variety of stressors: the instant removal of teaching hours and sudden income reduction; the casual nature of the employment precluding them from financial products such as mortgages and loans; low pay and lack of pay over the holiday periods; low pension contributions, and exclusion from other benefits that permanent lecturers received. They felt forced to accept any work, including multiple employments and/or lecture in subjects they were unfamiliar with.

Worries associated with the uncertainty of retaining lecturing hours were evidenced. LPA illustrated this when discussing funding, "if the funding was pulled … then they could have got rid of me." LPB described an incident when their lecturing hours were suddenly cut, reducing their income by half:

> *The manager called me up on the Friday to say that the numbers hadn't come through for enrolments - they were cutting all of my hours, and they were going to give me 12 hours instead of 24.*

Another example was given by LPD when their lecturing hours were summarily withdrawn:

> *There was one afternoon, when I was teaching … when my manager knocked on my door, saw only five students sitting in front of me, made me come outside and they said, 'I'm sorry these classes won't be running next week.' So my income halved overnight.*

And I (LPE) recounted when, after Covid, I was told that my classes would be removed from me forthwith:

> *They weren't getting any numbers through because [students] weren't coming on the courses. I was just told during the week of half term that that was it, there were no more hours for me.*

LPC summarised the shared views of the lecturers when considering how they perceived management viewed lecturing hour allocation to casual lecturers:

> *We'll see what hours we've got and then we'll just sort of put some on, but then we might cancel classes, and you know, you'll lose those hours, and we might not have as many hours as we thought. And you know, … this is the best we're ever going to offer you.*

The casual contract precluded access to financial products such as mortgages and loans with perceived serious consequences for the lecturers. I (LPE) deemed myself lucky to have entered FE on a casual contract after I had taken out a mortgage, although I worried I was not going to be able to make the mortgage payment:

> *I found it quite distressing because I'd just taken on a mortgage prior to moving to a zero-hours contract [in FE] from a permanent job, so it was always a question of whether I was actually going to be able to make the mortgage payments.*

LPC reported how gaining a permanent part-time contract afforded them a better standard of living and greater financial security:

> *If I had stayed on zero-hours, I wouldn't have been able to get a mortgage… I'd never even be able to get on the property ladder … I'd just been stuck renting quite sort of, you know, grotty places because I couldn't take on anything nicer because my money was up and down all the time. So, I had to sort of account for that in where I chose to live.*

LPB portrayed what had been a perturbing event when they had tried to re-negotiate a mortgage:

> *[a few] years ago, we wanted to move into a bigger house - the family had grown, and we went to the mortgage company that had provided our mortgage originally. We went in to meet the manager … who went all through our costs, jobs and contracts. The manager pretty much laughed, and the phrasing was, 'We will let you continue to have your existing mortgage with us, but please don't apply for any additional funding from us.' And that was because I was on a zero-hour contract. In the end we did get a mortgage, but we had to pay a higher rate of interest.*

The managers had started their careers on casual contracts, and although one manager had only been on a fixed-term contract for a year, they all had real life experience of the

challenges of casualisation, and they **knew what it's like** for their casual lecturers. MPB described struggling financially whilst employed on casual contracts:

> *My security was **on a knife edge** because it was costing me more in (outgoings) than I was earning … I was eating into my savings.*

MPC cogitated on the financial problems casualisation incurred in relation to income, and in accessing financial products:

> *In this cost-of-living crisis, if you're on zero-hours, and you think that they could be reduced at any time. … I think it must be a very difficult for people. It's also difficult for people when they … want to get mortgages or get loans … it's really difficult for them.*

Lack of holiday pay, and low pay were issues raised. The possible financial difficulties for the casual lecturers when on term-time-only contracts were detailed by MPE:

> *it would potentially … impact financially. … you won't get paid in the summer, so you've got to manage your finances, potentially I think … the biggest impact is financially.*

and MPA relating their own experience of both low pay and lack of holiday pay:

> *they don't even get holiday pay and I'm speaking from experience that on my £12 an hour that I was getting, when I was teaching at an FEC - and there was no holiday pay they said holiday pay was within that.*

LPA explained how they were paid less than permanent lecturers as they were not allowed to access increments, even though they were performing the same work:

> *even though it was lecturing … so for the duration of the contract I was on the bottom of the scale ... I was informed that that wasn't going to go up the scale.*

LPB provided an example of how for "years when I was working full-time hours, but not officially. I was earning £14 grand a year on a *[casual]* contract."

Lack of pay over holidays and covering for absences had deep financial implications. I (LPE) provided an example of when I had been working for agencies at apparently lucrative rates:

> *You got paid a good rate for the day but in SFCs there were 13 weeks of the year where you couldn't actually work as a minimum, and in GFECs there were about the same … And then you generally didn't get work before half term or before the holidays, because people who'd been off sick came back so that they could have the holiday. So that meant that out of a year you were looking at about 20 weeks that you couldn't work. So it only worked out at about £18,000/£19,000 a year.*

LPB accepted additional work over the holidays stating," I always had some extra work over the summer *[as it was]* better than going nine weeks without pay."

Living on a knife edge of insecurity, trying to increase financial income and hedge the uncertainty associated with losing work from one employment had led the lecturers (except LPA) to work for multiple employers at the same. LPC discussed their work for two separate FECs and its effect upon them:

> *I had another zero-hours [contract] at the other college. So I was working at two places … it wasn't ideal, because obviously I never knew what work I was going to get or how much work, … and that was quite worrying.*

LPB taught "in three different places across … four different contracts" and they describe the unpredictability of their multiple employments. One of their contracts for an OPFC was on a "project basis and that funding could stop at any time" and they accepted any lecturing hours wherever they could, lecturing in many different subjects, for example at one stage "teaching seven different separate classes." Similarly, I (LPE) describe the multiple subjects I taught in three different FECs each week:

> *So at one college I was teaching [subject1- level 3] and [subject2 – A level]. At another college I was teaching [subject3 Entry and Level 1] and [subject4 Level 1 and 2] and at the other college I was teaching [subject5 and subject6 - Level 2].*

LPC's response exemplified the lecturers' views when discussing the need to accept any work due to the testing nature of the casual contract:

> *I would take whatever I could get because I needed money to live. … it's quite precarious, and it doesn't feel great not knowing what money you're going to have. And whether, you know, what if a class gets cancelled and you lose that work? And that's uncertainty.*

LPD mentioned problems for their financial future, the low pay, the short working year, and changeable paid hours meant that they were not contributing to their pension, so not only was their present difficult, they perceived their future retirement would also be difficult:

> *I'm on the same money as someone who's been teaching three years, and I have been a [zero-hours] contract person for so long that my pension is laughable.*

Balancing the working day whilst working for multiple providers or teaching multiple subjects proved onerous for the lecturers, increasing stress and work-life balance issues. LPB stated the **knife edge** stresses they felt during their working day:

> *My downtime during the working day was equally impacted as having the four different roles ... I average about seven minutes for my lunch, … some days I don't eat, I don't go to the toilet ... I work 55+ hours a week with 177 different learners, seven different classes and still only [paid for] 21 teaching hours.*

This affected LPB's mental health, they were "burning out" and were worried about "the quality of the work" (See 4.5.2). I (LPE) discussed the **knife edge** precarity of my own working day which affected my sleep and dream patterns:

> *There was one day where I would work at the one college from 9:15 to 12:30. Then another college at 12:50 till 4:00, and then I was working at [the OPFC] 5:30 to 8:30. So I got to the stage where I wasn't quite sure what day it was or where I was supposed to be, and I did have quite a lot of dreams about timetabling at that stage.*

Balancing the workload of producing lessons for multiple subjects, and the administration and pastoral duties associated with, and expected from, multiple providers intensified the workload for all the lecturers. LPC summarised the lecturers' viewpoint:

> *It was hard going because … it was two different A levels (to teach). And there wasn't anything provided or anything like that, and I was literally re-inventing the wheel at times and that was a waste of energy and time.*

Apart from the challenging **knife edge** financial and job insecurities faced by the lecturers, the lecturers referenced casualisation led to mental health and well-being issues, not solely due to workload. They described a perceived lack of status, lack of self-worth and valuelessness, driven partially by a feeling the casual contract made them less appreciated than permanent lecturers, and their qualifications and experience counted for little – a view fitting into Standing's (2018) precariat-Progressive grouping (see 2.1). I (LPE), LPB, and LPD mentioned their qualifications and experience, and disbelief and disappointment that having done everything required academically they were still unable to achieve a permanent role. This led to feelings of sadness and despair. LPD succinctly related the feelings of the four lecturers:

> *What is the purpose in getting a degree and doing a postgraduate qualification if you are still doing the kind of things associated with unskilled labour, You know … my parents always said to me … work hard at school because you know, you don't want a boring, a nasty job … So I worked hard at school and yet I still have to fill out a monthly pay claim or I would not get paid … I shouldn't be trying to do a professional, postgraduate level job with students … whilst remembering to [fill in a monthly pay claim] as if I am a box shifter on a pie packing line.*

LPC, when offered a zero-hours role which had been advertised as a permanent part-time FTE contract stated how it made them feel:

> *A bit rubbish, because it was sort of - I've been there, you know, a long time by that point I was very experienced.*

and they felt dissatisfied, unappreciated and undervalued clarifying this:

> *They just stop giving you work. They don't even have to go to the trouble of telling you. When you get given a proper contract, as it were, you feel a bit more valued that they've actually committed to you a bit. You know, they're prepared to put their eggs in your basket as it were and give you those additional benefits and go with that sort of contract that you don't get on hourly-paid so definitely felt more part of things … yeah, just more valued.*

I (LPE) disclosed how depressed and unvalued I felt after being told one July work would be available in September, and suddenly, in September, peremptorily being told no work would be forthcoming:

> *I was told categorically do not get any work with anybody else, don't sign on with any agencies, we have got work for you in September. September 1st came, and I got a telephone call saying they hadn't got the student numbers, so I had no work at all… I hadn't registered with agencies. At the time to get your DBS cleared took up to six weeks … I actually had to go down to the Dole Office and sit there feeling like, umm. … [it was] quite, quite a depressing, desperate time...*

LPB had sought counselling and therapy as their professionalism and personal life had been affected by their status:

> *It really impacts on my understanding of my worth. And whether I'm good enough because they make me feel I'm not good enough and the system makes me feel I'm not good enough because I can't get a full-time job.*

The mental health and well-being effects of the **knife edge** status were effectively demonstrated by the relief voiced when the lecturers received partial, or full-time permanent contracts. I (LPE) told how I had burst into tears, feeling vast relief, but then how this had changed to overwhelming anger (see 1.3). Equivalent views were encapsulated by LPD:

> *I think it definitely reduced my stress levels because they can't just fire me now at the drop of a hat. They can't close my classes at will and then reduce my income. I can lease a car. I can sign a personal loan agreement. I live in a [rented] house, if I want to, I could possibly get a mortgage. I don't have to live in a way I don't want to… it certainly it gives me more choices and it reduces my stress levels.*

The lecturers appeared to feel undervalued and resentful of their casual employment which impacted their mental health and well-being, and their financial and job situation, and LPC thought management needed to be aware of the negative well-being effects of casualisation:

> *To understand that for that person, for that staff member it doesn't feel very nice, and you don't feel terribly valued - on a … zero-hours you feel expendable.*

MPA echoed the call by LPC for the managers to understand the situation of the casual lecturer. They summarised the struggles and professional conflicts potentially faced by the managers as they **knew what it's like** to be in the **knife edge** situation for the casual lecturers, and how the managers' decisions impacted on themselves, and their permanent and casual lecturers:

> *Just that managers need to be really understanding of what they can ask their casual staff to do. They have to have it in the back of the mind that they are being paid very poor wages. They're not being paid for all the other stuff that comes along with teaching and that salaried members of staff take on board and sometimes even for a salaried… member of staff it's above and beyond … but then equally be well aware that they can't dump that on members of staff in the team 'cause that's going to affect them.*

4.5.2 Chains and weak links

> *A chain is only as strong as its weakest link is an idiom meaning that if one link fails, the whole chain will. In this thesis it conceptualises the actual, or anticipated future, issues associated with the use of casual lecturers, and how the casualised lecturers integrate into the organisation (see appendix 14).*

The managers collectively appeared to believe casual contracts created **weak links in the chain** and were generally not beneficial for their FECs, causing additional work for the managers and departments, and affecting students' learning and outcomes. The managers **knowing what it's like** for the casual lecturers personally led to additional workload for themselves and their permanent lecturers, and the lack of commitment and loyalty of the casual lecturer could also enhance the workload allocation challenges. Difficulties with communication with, and team integration of, casual lecturers were revealed. The lecturers

concurred discussing casualisation created working life and relationship difficulties for themselves (see 4.5.1), the managers and permanent lecturers.

MPC articulated a shared view of the **weak links** casualisation created in team integration and meeting attendance:

> *The difficulty in having large numbers of zero-hours lecturers that are paid for what they do … They're not around to do meetings and to be fully part of those teams.*

MPB agreed:

> *[Casual contracts] hindered the integration of the casualised staff … into the department. And that applied both for people who were significantly [limited in their hours] permanent variable-hours lecturers who … exhibited the same reluctances as the agency staff, and the people on fixed-term or [zero-hours] at the college to integrate fully into the work of the department."*

MPA concurred, they had seen "things like attending meetings or working outside the classroom became a bit of a problem." This created extra work for the managers as they attempted to ensure their casual lecturers were communicated with effectively. An example capturing the views of all the managers was given by MPC:

> *If they didn't attend [meetings], I had to then make sure that that same information … was cascaded to them and ensure that they worked with others when they were in college to make sure that they were discussing learners, and you know everything else you'd expect me to discuss. So it was always tricky for me to have high numbers of casual hours staff.*

Additionally, MPD found their workload increased when passing on communications to their casual lectures who worked in the evening or at the weekends:

> *They would pick up some evening classes [or] Saturday classes for me … Well, [it] took quite a bit of my own time to try and make sure they felt that they were being communicated with, so whatever went out to the rest of the team also went out to them.*

MPA's response conveys the managers' perspective when contemplating the challenges they had faced with casual lecturers integrating into their respective teams stating:

> *Whereas if they're … salaried [permanent lecturers] … there's an expectation there. It's a more cohesive team … you can rely on them more.*

Echoed in Ryan, Connell and Burgess's (2017) study of the views towards casual lecturers of Australian HE academic managers, the lecturers thought **a weak link** lay with the managerial culture and views towards casual staff; in some FECs the lecturers had been

included, in others they had not. The lecturers displayed a desire to integrate into the teams, however, being given certain teaching hours on certain days, and the need to work for multiple FECs could make integration difficult. LPD discussed how in one FEC they did feel as part of the team "in that people treated me as just another colleague … I was indistinguishable", although they had experienced a different attitude in other colleges:

> *In some colleges … the [casual] staff sit at those desks over there and [the permanent lecturers] talk to each other and nobody much bothers with the [casual] staff.*

An example demonstrating the responses of the lecturers is taken from LPC who felt:

> *as if I was a full member of the team [as] it was quite a small team in [this curriculum area, you know. But they found me a desk and you know and were quite welcoming and in this respect I was not treated differently from the [permanent lecturers].*

Unfortunately, the zero-hours contract, and their concurrent work in another FEC meant they were unable to attend the weekly meeting on a Friday. LPC continued:

> *it wasn't great for me because if I'd have been full-time …I wouldn't have been timetabled on that Friday afternoon [in the other FEC]. I would have gone to the meeting. And so I missed out on that. And that and getting to know my colleagues better or you know, just generally learning more about it getting more information about what was going on and things like that because of having these two contracts… but I couldn't turn down the work on Friday afternoon [in the other FEC].*

In contrast, LPB reported "because of my longevity" that they had felt "like a full member of the team" however, rifts within the team became clear when LPB discussed a **weak link** expressed by all the lecturers, in that their perceived status within the FEC was dependent upon the nature of their contract and job title. This created a divide between the permanent lecturers and themselves. LPA clarified how they felt and how they perceived they were viewed professionally:

> *because of the nature of the job and the contract, it could be make you feel quite, it makes you feel less confident in that organisation. Because you are seen as the [casual] member of staff.*

LPD stated their casual job title, which was on their ID card, email address and the FEC intranet affected themselves and changed the attitude colleagues displayed towards them:

> *I didn't want it to say [casual] lecturer on the intranet as there shouldn't be a distinction. I think it should just call you a lecturer because I think it makes me feel a substandard citizen … I feel … that if you're on a full-time lecturer salary, you're treated as a career professional. If you're on a*

> *[casual contract], you're treated as someone that's just dipping your hand in.*

LPC also discussed one FEC's expectation of casual lecturers was not to integrate. They stated:

> *There was zero expectation that I would be anywhere near the college unless I was actually teaching. Literally turn up, teach, now go away again.*

This perception of the divide between permanent and casual lecturers could exacerbate the **weak links in the chain** of a non-integrated team creating a less effective lecturing workforce.

The managers did not reference status and job title as an issue, although they all acknowledged that casualisation increased the workload for themselves and their permanent lecturers. This created another **weak link in the chain** as a further divide between casual and permanent staff was described by the managers, who appeared to think their permanent lecturers felt put upon when allocated more of the preparation, lesson planning, and administrative duties than the casual lecturers, summarised by MPA:

> *because the work that you can't pass on, from my experience to the [zero-hours lecturers], for justifiable reasons, then falls back on other members of staff, so you might actually be doing one and a bit person's job.*

This divide was apparent when the managers discussed casualisation affecting the availability of the lecturers' working time over the holidays. They perceived this could influence the casual lecturers' attitude and job performance, and the FEC's curriculum and lesson planning, epitomised by MPE:

> *if you are a [casual lecturer] … you won't get paid in the summer … it can impact on your work. So if you are of the mind that I'm not gonna work in half-terms and holidays, your potential job performance could … lessen, whereas if you're full-time [it doesn't].*

and echoed by MPA:

> *putting planning into your lectures and things you always do … in your downtime or in your planning time, which [zero-hours lecturers] don't get, so they might not put as much effort … into the work that they're going to be delivering to the students.*

The lecturers conveyed the same view, agreeing lesson planning, preparation, and student outcomes were directly affected by the casual lecturers not being paid in the holidays and not being present during meetings. It appeared they also viewed this as detrimental to their

own professionalism. LPB discussed an experience common to all the lecturers at the start of the teaching year:

> *After one decision making meeting [in the summer holidays] where the planning for the next year or the evaluation meetings [happens]. And we're not invited … In September I would come, and [other casual lecturers] would come to [deliver this] programme. And you would be expected to just run on with it. So where is our planning and our time? So, me and [the other casual lecturers] were literally running round really fast to get stuff together for our classes. Whereas the full-time staff have had the summer to do that.*

The ability for the casual lecturer to refuse to accept work was another **weak link in the chain** creating problems for management and the permanent lecturers. MPE cited an example when their permanent lecturers were unduly affected when one department's courses shifted to evening lectures and the casual lecturers refused to teach (see 4.6.2), placing additional burdens on the permanent staff:

> *Full-time [lecturers] ... were contracted to work evenings as [the casual lecturers] aren't. I could tell full-time members of staff you're working evenings … but the [the casual lecturers] don't have to do it because they say 'no' to the hours.*

The managers expressed how the extra burden upon themselves and the permanent lecturing staff also appeared to affect the students, giving rise to a perception of a disjointed student experience. The use of casual staff impacted extra-curricular activities as MPA discussed:

> *That trips and visits were ... stifled … because you haven't got a flexible workforce … because they're not getting paid to be there. … so if someone's just employed to be there for three hours a day but you need two people to go on a trip or a visit, … unless they get paid for it, they're not going to turn up*

According to MPA "parents' evenings, … feedback, quality of marking …." were also affected. MPA described this, stating:

> *Marking can be quite poor because the hourly-paid rate often includes a marking fee, but this, you know, there's £12 or £15 or whatever it is not going very far when you start dividing it down like that, so people aren't getting paid, actually they're getting paid to be in front of the students, but they're not really getting paid for the marking they do after or the time for it. So, it has huge impacts on the department.*

The effects of the zero-hours' low additional administrative time in the hourly-paid rate, to cover marking, moderation, lesson planning and preparation was stated by MPE:

> *You could have someone on four (lecturing) hours, and they would only get two hours admin time.*

Casualisation also affected attendance monitoring impacting student achievement and increased work for managers. MPC described one effect:

> *Then you have all the hassle of, 'have they done their registers? Have they done this? Have they done that? Well, no, they haven't' so that creates all the work of trying to track them down to, you know, so it can be problematic.*

MPA's example of the difficulties in the lack of attendance monitoring and the consequences of this for the students, and the extra burden upon themselves and their permanent lecturers, represents the thoughts of the managers:

> *The fact that if a student doesn't turn up, we have to ring home at the end of the day … You can't expect [zero-hours lecturers] to do that because once they've finished their hour then that's them done. So somebody else has to take that burden on or not, so you know, the students don't get chased in which case they can potentially do what they like, which affects their educational outcomes at the end.*

The lecturers described their views of casualisation upon student outcomes, feeling a professional conflict when discussing their students. LPA relates how the uncertainty of their fixed-term contract renewal made it difficult to plan stating, "it made life uncertain. It was hard to plan learning." LPB related the issues for the students associated with the casual lecturer not knowing which classes, if any, they would be allocated after the summer break, stating, "You don't know what classes you're getting so why make a scheme of work?" Both LPA and I (LPE) discussed the problems with a lack of resources which would impact learning. I related an experience where the resources for a course I was unfamiliar with were not provided, "no materials were provided either, so I had to create all my own materials," and LPA narrated their story of another FEC where casual lecturers "had no access to resources and no access to photocopying, and it made it quite difficult."

Another **weak link in the chain** was the disruption to student teaching and learning related to the perceived lack of loyalty or professionalism of casual, particularly, agency lecturers, which again increased work and stress for the managers and their permanent lecturers. This theme is investigated by Hanley and Orr (2019) in their research surrounding the recruitment and retention of FE lecturers (see 2.5). MPC described their experience of agency lecturers as being uncommitted declaring, "[casual lecturers] … haven't got any

commitment to you." MPB concurred, relating their thoughts on their cumulative experiences of agency lecturers:

> *"mostly, horrendous. And horrendous from two perspectives. Most of all, there's from the business end of things … and from a teaching and learning perspective. I've been trying to think back … for an example of somebody … who was not an unmitigated disaster that came through an agency and … I'm still racking my brains, and I still can't think of one."*

MPD elucidated the same view:

> *For over 10 years now … we've endured exactly the same issues with [casual] vocational teachers that we had rock up on a Monday from the staffing agency and be utterly useless or in some cases might not even turn up.*

MPC recounted an experience where their working life, and the students' learning, was impacted by the need to remove a casual lecturer and then reallocate the classes. They explain what they witnessed:

> *expensive agency staff who've come in to deliver … unfortunately for the agency lecturer their classroom was right opposite my office, so I watched the lecturer sit there and do absolutely nothing for two-hour periods and the kids were playing hangman, or doing word searches.*

MPB related a similar experience where an agency lecturer's students complained, declaring:

> *they weren't learning anything and there were complaints from a couple of girls that their behaviour was inappropriate, and their language was inappropriate.*

The lecturer left and MPB "ended up with a class of 50 students" which they then had to teach.

MPB, MPC and MPB were also critical of the quality of the casual, particularly agency, lecturers, and their perception of why they remained as agency lecturers, as exemplified by MPB:

> *In my experience people who are registered with teaching agencies are registered with them for a reason … and … that reason would be either that they would never get through the recruitment process to be offered a full-time permanent post or if they were offered one they wouldn't hold it down for very long.*

Surprisingly, the lecturers also commented on the **weak link** of the lack of professionalism of other casual and agency lecturers they had worked with. LPD describing how they had worked with other casual lecturers who "because they are on a zero-hours contract" had

“little commitment, they don't feel they have to give them whole commitment to it.” LPA discussed when the agency lecturers they worked with left without notice:

> *it means that there is no commitment on those staff, for example. They took on agency staff recently who have no hesitation to leave when they got a better offer, therefore leaving the service without cover.*

The lecturers spoke of the fractionalisation for the students and departments of the use of casual lecturers. I (LPE) discussed the disruption for student learning:

> *from the point of view of continuity for the student it's not beneficial and also for results, it's not particularly beneficial because you'll have [casual lecturers] diving in and diving out.*

and I related the problem for a middle manager for whom I was working had experienced when trying to retain me:

> *the manager at the time was desperately trying to get me a permanent contract but just couldn't secure one … they were terrified that I was going to just walk out and leave and get a better offer, which is actually what happened in the end.*

This added to the stresses for the managers and again impacted the students.

An additional **weak link** was the managers **knew what it’s like** to be casually employed, potentially adding to theirs, and their permanent lecturers’ workload and stress (also see 4.5.1). MPA, MPB and MPE supported this contention. For example, MPA states:

> *they couldn’t expect a [zero-hours lecturer] to [take on additional work] because once they've finished their hour then that's them done. So somebody else has to take that burden on or not.*

MPB explained:

> *I wouldn't ask them to do anything that they weren't paid to do because from my own experience, you know, that's not great … I'm very much a do unto others as you would have them do unto you... I wouldn't ask people to do something that I wouldn't like to be asked myself.*

Equally, MPE amplified the managers’ views, divulging:

> *so I wouldn't really be able to ask them to do anything outside of [their paid lecturing hours].*

An addition to the increased difficulties and stress for the managers managing casual lecturers was stated by myself (LPE). In one FEC my manager had promised lecturing hours in September for me, and at the start of the new academic year; the student numbers were greatly decreased and the manager had to inform me:

> *[They] phoned me because they had no work, they were very upset because they knew what the situation that it put me in. They were very, very upset. There was nothing they could do.*

This **weak link** shows the managers' **knife edge** struggle with the actualisation of employing casual lecturers as they **knew what it's like** and could empathise with the difficulties faced by them, reflected in Ball's (2016) examination of the mental struggle senior leaders' experience when faced with performativity which references Foucault's (Foucault, 1982) theories on truths and refusals (see 2.9.1).

4.5.3 Working lives summary

The working lives and relationships of participants were deeply affected by the casual contract. The lecturers **lived on a knife edge** facing difficulties with finances, both with maintaining a liveable income and with accessing financial products. Casualisation had left them feeling stressed and valueless, not full members of or integrated into the team, perceiving their status within the organisation was deemed as lesser than permanent lecturers. They appeared to be continually looking for other work, working in multiple employments, teaching subjects they were unfamiliar with, and expected to perform unpaid work. They were unable to effectively plan and prepare for their teaching. These factors affected their work-life balance, mental health and well-being. There seemed to be a residual resentment of the casual contract, particularly in light of their qualifications and experience. This led to difficulties between the casual lecturers and the managers and permanent lecturers. The managers also found casualisation created **weak links in the chain** for themselves, their permanent lecturers, and their students. Their workload increased when casual lecturers left or did not perform the work they were contracted for, or were not paid additional time or in the holidays to help with planning and preparation. The managers also **knew what it's like** to be employed casually and were aware of the difficulties for the lecturers adding to their challenges in allocating work, leading to perceptions of power imbalances within their working relationships.

4.6 Power relationships findings

The power relationships between the managers and the lecturers were complex, with the majority of the power appearing to rest with the managers' ability to employ or re-employ, and increase or decrease lecturing hours, resonating with Pfeffer and Salancik's (2003) dependent organisation (see 2.9.2). This, for some of the managers, came with the caveat of their personal understanding of the possible problems faced by the casual lecturers,

resonating with Foucault's second definition of being a subject – where the power relationship is defined by the subject's own experience and knowledge (Foucault, 1982). The lecturers' responses implied a powerlessness and subjugation, in direct contrast to the managers' power, with limited ability to refuse any work offered, coercion to work beyond the hours or job role they were remunerated for, and in their inability to speak out, reflecting Foucault's parrhesia (2001; 2019) where the subject of the power relationship is unable to voice an opinion due to their place in society (see 2.9.1). The power relationship only tilted towards the casual lecturer when they were financially independent of the job, or when they were able to refuse work or leave for alternative employment. The managers appeared to concur, perceiving the lecturers' power was their capacity to refuse to commit to additional work outside of their contracted hours, or to not fulfil the role for which they were employed, and their power to choose to leave the FEC rapidly, echoing Mechanic's (1962) dependent relationships theory (see 2.9.2).

4.6.1 Carrots and sticks

> *An idiom meaning the use of reward and/or punishment to control. In this thesis its application is an examination of how manipulation is used on casual lecturers – either a potential permanent contract or loss of teaching hours. Although this is encompassed in "**Try before you buy**" it explores a more cynical use of the hopes and fears of the casual lecturer.*

Using the carrot and the stick is a metaphor based on making a donkey work**,** the **carrot** being a tempting reward to encourage the donkey to work harder, the **stick** used to beat the donkey into submission. The **carrot was dangled** when managers used casualisation as a means of manipulation and power to control by potentially exploiting casual lecturers' hopes of a permanent, or continuing, contract, and encouraging them to perform additional unpaid duties. The latter was not explicitly stated in the manager interviews, and MPB, MPC and MPD only referred to their use of casualisation as a beneficial form of extended interview (see 4.4.3) (Gleeson, Davies and Wheeler, 2005), although this also demonstrated the manager power in using the casual contract as a recruitment process, and could have been sub-consciously used to manipulate. The lecturers agreed with the **carrot** of the hope of a permanent or continuing contract being **dangled** by their managers to coerce them, consciously or sub-consciously to perform additional unremunerated duties, or to remain within the organisation.

MPA discussed their direct encounters of **dangling the carrot** as manipulation by managers they had worked with:

> *Whereas other managers … would manipulate people … there was always this **carrot dangled** of a potential permanent position, you know, keep going, do this much, when you go for the interview for the permanent position that's coming up, you know you might get the job … a potential permanent position.*

MPE acknowledged the perception of potential manipulation when they related how some of their casual lecturers would exceed expectations, including working over their paid hours, to impress:

> *Currently with my casual members of staff. They will go above and beyond. And they will do what they need to do to kind of impress and try and maybe get that full-time contract*

and MPE felt "very lucky to be in that situation," contemplating whether they were manipulating their casual lecturers:

> *Because you could look at it to say, actually, are we taking advantage of a situation? … … they don't question the hours they're here, that they work. I ask them to do an open evening. They do it. They're very eager … Now you could say that I'll be taking advantage of that. No, I don't think we are. All, I think it just comes down to the individual.*

The lecturers all experienced the **carrot being dangled.** LPA's manager **dangled** the prospect of a permanent position to encourage them to sign a further fixed-term contract:

> *after the first six months [of the temporary contract] … [the manager] extended my contract … But then 12 months down the line, I was still on a temporary contract.*

LPB and I (LPE) had both perceived the potential for a continuing contract or more hours **dangled,** if we worked hard, although this had not always translated into extra lecturing hours, exemplified by LPB:

> *If you're hardworking, if you go above and beyond, if you're flexible, if you're adaptable, you'll get recognised. They'll give you more work … but I assumed I could go up to full-time. But I kept on being given less.*

LPC felt that a **carrot had been dangled** to initially attract them to apply for an additional permanent part-time contract in the FEC in which they were already working, however, once they had applied and been invited to interview the FEC had changed it to zero-hours:

> *[It was] quite interesting, in these three days, … because it had been a proper contract, but strangely, by the time it came to the interview process, it had miraculously turned into a zero-hours.*

Fearfulness of the lecturers' employment status increased their powerlessness as the casual lecturers seemed unable to exercise "Parrhesia" (Foucault, 2019), the ability to speak freely, or to challenge a situation (see 2.9.1). LPD was concerned with the **stick** being wielded when they expressed their inability to speak freely or express their real feelings stating:

> *There are situations where it would arise where they could either keep my class open and keep me in hours, or close my colleague's class or the other way around. And therefore I thought it was always better to stay in their good books.*

LPB related the **stick** of losing work if they spoke out about their contract or their pay:

> *If we're unhappy and we complain about [casual] contracts or we complain about the lack of cost of living increases [we are told] that we should, you know, quit your job if you think it's unfair, you should find another job.*

LPD presented an artificial version of themselves, needing "to look like I was permanently enthusiastic, permanently available 24/7." They would agree to travel to "any venue anywhere" to "teach any subject standing on my head …because you are extremely dispensable." They also they felt coerced "to work in holidays or else you will be accused of not doing your job properly."

In agreement, I (LPE) believed that the possibility of achieving a permanent contract, coupled with the fear of not being allocated hours left me, "sort of in hock to them", engendering sycophancy:

> *I didn't feel I could speak freely because I didn't want to rock the boat. And if I had identified something … that wasn't working very well I didn't like to say to the manager because then they might not give me anymore work, so it was a matter of just grin and smile and nod.*

LPB gave an example of when **the stick** was used. They thought they were "too flexible … too kind. So my hours got took because *[the management]* knew I'd try hard" and this left them wondering if they were "doing something wrong? … Not doing enough?" This led to a feeling that LPB could not:

> *let the ball slide, because if I let the ball slide at all I was scared for many, many years that by not achieving what they expect, which is impossible … I'll lose my hours. But over time I've been losing my hours anyway*

This placed LPB in an unworkable situation – to keep working over their paid hours to impress, but by doing this relinquishing all their power as it allowed management to expect

them to continue this level of work, a situation detailed by Mason and Megoran (2021) which casual HE lecturers' experiences were synonymous with those of the casual FE lecturers. LPB also tried to "make sure that the right people see the effort I was putting in" to attempt to not be "managed out" and feeling that they "had to work harder … forever trying to pick up extra work to prove my weight." LPC also felt that some of the managers thought they could "just ride roughshod over *[the casual lecturers]* … just try and boss them into" accepting additional work or forcing them to attend unpaid meetings.

The self-imposed **stick** of needing to realise student achievement, lecturer professionalism and the love of their FE work was contemplated by the lecturers, and how they were conflicted by trying to meet the needs of their students whilst attempting to remain within the bounds of their paid hours, a conflict of self-interest comparably discussed by Gadsby and Smith (2023) (see 2.6). LPD shared why they remained within FE on casual contracts:

> *I think this is the bind … This is why I do things. This is why I put up with the colleges. This is why I put up with zero hours contracts. I care so much about my students, as do my colleagues, that what I do - I do for them.*

and LPB stated:

> *As a passionate teacher - you put more in and unfortunately on zero-hours you can't let the ball slide at all – I do it for the students. And [management] know I'm here for the students. It's not like I'm just doing a nothing job.*

The powerlessness of the lecturers when the **carrot was dangled, and the stick wielded** meant that they were unable to speak out, and felt they had to accept any work offered, even if it was teaching subjects in which they were not qualified (see 4.5.1). LPD clarified the feelings of all the lecturers:

> *You have to read what is the popular thing to say. And in so far as it doesn't compromise your integrity, sound enthused because they can fire you tomorrow.*

MPA discussed how the perceived disposability and financial insecurity might subjugate the casual lecturers:

> *"I don't think they were [open, contributed to work discussions], I think … they probably held back a little bit 'cause they didn't feel comfortable. They didn't feel that their job was secure. .... they didn't want to rock the boat initially, then, as time wears on and they've been there a few months and they realise that they're being asked more and more and they're not getting renumeration for that then, perhaps they were a bit more vocal, but initially, no, I feel like they held back. Maybe because they weren't secure in post, perhaps because they were disposable, and if you're*

> *disposable and you're relying on that income, you're not going to be open, are you?"*

This, arguably, demonstrates the parrhesiatic enforced speechlessness of fear (Foucault, 2019). The **use of the stick**, although implicit in the power the managers had over work allocation was only directly referenced by MPE. MPE had faced management difficulties with casual lecturers who refused to accept hours on times and days they did not wish to work (see 4.4.4, and 4.6.2). MPE's power was apparent when allocating work to casual lecturers. If they could not work the hours offered, they may not have been given alternative hours.

> *The [casual lecturers] didn't want to work [at this time]. So I turned around saying, well, actually I'm not sure we can give you as many hours as we have previously …*

The **carrot and stick** perceived by the lecturers to be used to control and subjugate led to the **power resting in the hands** of the managers. However, this was not always true as the ability to leave, and to refuse work afforded **power in the hands** of the lecturer.

4.6.2 The power is in their hands

> *An idiom meaning the power is in your possession or control, applied in this thesis as the exploration of the power that the casual contract conversely brings to both the manager and the lecturer.*

The **power in the hands of the managers** was being able to appoint or dismiss casual lecturing staff, allocate or decrease lecturing hours, and offer permanent contracts. The power imbalance could also force the lecturers or accept and perform unpaid duties (see 4.6.1). MPC, as a Principal, and MPD, as a Deputy Principal held power over policy change (see 4.4) and they exercised their senior leadership power to change policy to moving away from casualisation and appoint lecturers on a permanent basis.

MPA purported the "disposable" nature of casualisation, with MPE stating:

> *If the agency or the individual can't meet that need, you move on to the next person or the next agency. That's the nature of [casual] workers, isn't it?*

MPB, MPC and MPD discussed the capability to remove casual lecturers with ease, but only when they had not fulfilled their contractual arrangements. An example was provided by MPB:

> *Their behaviour was inappropriate, and their language was inappropriate, so they left.*

As demonstrated in **using the stick** (see 4.6.1) the lecturers believed they were unable to refuse work, and needed to be seen to be working to the best of, and beyond, their ability continually, correlating with the manager power holding control over them, although when offered other employment or financially stable the power balance changed. LPA describes how the management were able to "kind of get rid of staff if they need to, take on staff when they need to." The fear of not being given hours placed the **power in the hands of the managers**.

However, opposing this view was MPC and MPD. As a Principal and Chief Executive, MPC had demonstrated the formidable power they held. They instigated a policy of decasualisation and wished to instigate a people-centred culture in their organisation, with MPD, their Deputy, supporting the policy. They wanted all members of staff to feel a part of the college, to feel valued, to express their opinions, and to access development opportunities. They stated although they were not able to pay high salaries, they wanted to create a culture in their organisation that lecturers wanted to remain within. They saw their policy of decasualisation as central to this. When MPC was asked if decasualisation would have happened without their vision they replied, "if I wasn't here driving that, they'd just have been on *[zero-hours]*." MPC's positionality in the organisation enabling the policy change, exemplified Pfeffer and Salancik's (2003) theory of dependent organisation (see 2.9.2). LPC's responses resonates with MPC's belief in creating a nurturing FEC. LPC discussed how their refusal to accept work sometimes depended upon the relationship they had with their manager, they stated:

> *"the manager I had at that time was not very nice, so I felt quite good about (turning down the work), petty, but heh? So yeah, it depended if you'd got a good relationship*

However, further down the management scale it seemed as if the managers were unable to influence policy and were powerless to change the working contract of the lecturer. MPA discussed when they were desperate for staff and wished for permanent lecturers but could only appoint casual (see 4.4.2):

> *you'll take anyone you can get, rightly or wrongly … if someone says that's going to be a part-time member of staff that's hourly-paid or casual, you'll take it*

The **power in the hands of the lecturer**, perceived by the managers, was that they could leave at will, not turn up, or not perform work to the best of their ability. They were also able to refuse to accept additional lecturing hours or refuse to perform duties outside of their paid hours. Often, the ability to refuse work or dictate the terms of work acceptance was when the casual lecturer was in a financially stable position. Specialist or shortage-subject, in-demand, lecturers were also able to negotiate higher pay and access work with greater stability. The lecturers appeared to concur with this perception, with the caveat of the difficulties of refusing work for fear of not being given further employment.

All the managers expounded the lecturers' power in being able to refuse additional work for which they perceived was unpaid. MPA had witnessed a power shift from the manager to the casual lecturer. As the casual lecturer realised that the casual contract situation would not change, or they would not be remunerated for additional hours, or a permanent role was not forthcoming, they moved from a subjugated stance of not being able to speak openly or refuse work, to an attitude of defiant compliance and a "work-to-rule", leaving when they gained a better offer. This reclaimed their control by displaying their actions modifying others, moving from a slave relationship to that of a free subject (Foucault, 1982): MPA disclosed:

> *So, initially, those people would be relieved to have a place of work. But then, as it goes on that they're going to stop putting the effort … because they're not getting paid for it"*

MPA continued, discussing the lecturers would eventually refuse to attend meetings or parents' evenings when they realised they would remain casual:

> *acknowledging in the back of my mind that eventually there will come a time where they'll say, 'No, sorry I'm not attending that meeting because I don't get paid for it.'*

The perception of the lecturers' ability to "work to rule" and rigidly adhere to the working hours paid for was equally shown by MPB:

> *Their drivers were quite simply, 'I'm getting paid to teach N hours, and that's what I'm going to do, I'm going to teach N hours. And I'm going to do the marking related to those N hours teaching. And then I'm going home.*

MPC stated the casual lecturers, "Just breeze in, do what they've gotta do, breeze out."

The lecturers were in accord with the managers, perceiving their main power was their ability to leave rapidly or to refuse to work, and they all had either personally experienced

this power, or witnessed other casual lecturers who had. LPA left the FEC for "a permanent … job that was better paid." LPB cited an example where other casual lecturers they worked with had:

> *Had enough and were working to rule. They were doing as minimum as they could … saying, 'If you want me,' (quite rightly) … – if you want me to do all this, you need to give me the time to do it'.*

LPC related when one of their managers tried to make them attend a meeting on a day that they were not working at the college and LPC had refused to attend:

> *It was expected that you would attend meetings … and the manager was quite stern about it. I said to them I had got work elsewhere. I can't come …I didn't really fancy dragging myself there to attend the meeting for an hour, that in my mind, I wasn't being paid for.*

LPA had worked alongside agency lecturers who left summarily:

> *[They had] no hesitation to leave when they got a better offer … [as] they didn't have to give any notice. They didn't need to come in the next day."*

LPD also related how **the power was in their hands** when they were able to turn down work or write the schemes of work:

> *I could say I don't want to teach that class or when it came to who's gonna write the scheme of work - It was the full-timers that should do that and not me.*

LPC's power was demonstrated when they had been offered a poorly paid permanent contract which they were willing to refuse as they had casual lecturing work elsewhere. They had been able to negotiate a higher salary and accepted the job:

> *It was so bad that I had made the decision to turn it down, to basically say actually I will stay as I am because I wasn't going to be better off financially. And actually, the other college … pays more… Whereas actually if I took this full-time job, I was committed to being paid rubbish.*

LPC who, when offered a permanent contract, left with little notice:

> *When I was offered the full-time contract for the college I wanted to work at, … I had to give a week or two weeks' notice and that's exactly what I gave them. And the manager of the department was not very happy. And I said, 'well this is the notice I'm required to give. That's what I'm giving. I've got them waiting for me, you know, getting to start my full-time job. So I'm going.' and [the manager] wasn't very happy, but they were obviously happy to use these contracts, these zero-hours contracts.*

LPC provided an example where the **power was out of the hands** of the manager:

> *It gave them a lot less control of their workforce as it were in terms of and that surely got to affect, their planning and things because if you've got classes planned and you're using hourly-paid staff, if they all just let you down, what do you do? They just suddenly all get better offers or suddenly decide they don't fancy it. What are you gonna do? Who's gonna teach that class? Or are you gonna just not run that class and turn those students away. Or try and shuffle them onto something else – a complete headache.*

For the managers MPE was the sole manager to contemplate how the casual contract could be understood differently by the casual lecturers than the manager. They deliberated on the casual lecturers' interpretation of the contract giving them the power to dictate working hours:

> *the whole point of that casual contract is that it's flexible. However, my experience is that the employees are not as flexible, and they want … the same hours that they've had over many years. Now that doesn't suit the business and that doesn't suit the model of what I think is a casual contract.*

This again afforded **the power in the hands of the lecturers**, however there were two caveats to this power: the lecturers needed to be financially stable, and/or they needed to teach an in-demand shortage-subject. As MPE stated, illustrating the former:

> *it's just that's their circumstances in their personal life, … they don't actually need the work.*

and the latter:

> *I suppose that's discreet to just [these shortage-subject] staff… good [a certain subject area] are very difficult to come by.*

MPC and MPD also discussed how the power would rest in the hands of specialist casual lecturers when negotiating their renumeration, with MPD elucidating:

> *So the **power very much in this instance is in the hands** of the individual. [They said] 'I can be your specialist lecturer … but I tell you what - I'm only gonna if you're gonna pay me £400 a day.' So it depends on the nature of what you get that individual to come in and do.*

MPD concluded regarding the power of a shortage-subject lecturer:

> *I think the power and the struggles are different if you're looking for someone to come and teach something more generic… I think the power base moves at that stage [to the manager].*

Equally, I (LPE) related a time when I had left education completely and the department head of one of the FECs I had worked for could not recruit to the role I had left:

> *He was contacting me constantly because they couldn't get anybody to come and work for them. So in that sense that did give me a bit of power. And when I decided that I did want to go back into teaching, I contacted this person. And they tried to offer me a lower salary than I'd been on previously. And I said I'm not coming back unless you pay me a higher salary … So in that respect, because I knew that they were having problems. I knew from other people, members of the team, they were having problems recruiting that I've got a bit of power there.*

A reverse indication of the **power being in the hands of the lecturer** was when the lecturer found the casual contract suited them. LPB discussed how if taking a permanent position they would not be able to book an extended holiday, demonstrating how the casual contract gave them power over their life choices. LPC mentioned feeling in control when having a zero-hours contract running in tandem with a permanent part-time contract enabled them to achieve financial security, and permitted them to turn down lecturing hours on the zero-hours contract:

> *I felt I liked it because it meant I felt I had some control over my timetable, because if they tried to get me to do something I didn't want to do I would just say no and obviously I'd have my core hours when I had to do what they told me, you know. But if they said, 'Oh, you've got this time on your zero-hours you could do this,' and if it was something I didn't like the sound of then I would just say, 'No, I'm sorry, I'm booked elsewhere or something, you know?*

Conversely, I found myself in the opposing position to LPC. Although I (LPE) had disliked being employed on casual contracts and had desperately sought a permanent position, on achieving one I had been surprised to discover I held a different viewpoint:

> *I couldn't turn around and say I'm not doing that, and I was timetabled to teach two evenings, so it was two long days following each other, which I found very, very difficult to do. And I found it in a sense, quite constraining. I was quite, quite interested to feel that I no longer had any control over what I could choose to teach or not.*

Finally, LPD raised an interesting power viewpoint. They believed it was the system that held the power:

> *I don't think any of the line managers I've ever worked for consciously exploited my compassion. I think they work within a system that may expose them to the pressure to do. They may be under certain pressures that mean that they're happy to let someone carry on and plan the department for them. And I don't know why HR and the senior managers behave as they do, and but I suspect it's because they are under pressure as well … I don't think there is one malevolent department or individual. I think it's most likely the product of the system. The way things are run*

now, like of course individuals and departments could improve that, I don't know enough to know how much agency they have to do that.

4.6.3 Power relationships summary

As a consequence of casualisation the power relationships between the managers and the lecturers were complex. The lecturers believed casualisation created a **carrot and stick** interplay, with the **carrot** being the potential of more hours or a permanent contract, and the **stick** being refusal of work, or non-fulfilment of additional unpaid work could lead to a removal or reduction in lecturing hours. They also felt that their professionalism, and love of their work, was used as a **stick** as they deemed if they did not work extra unpaid hours their students may not achieve. Conversely, the managers appeared to believe the casual contract could place the **power in the hands of the lecturers** as they could refuse extra teaching hours, work for other FECS, and refuse to work unpaid hours. Retention was deemed a particular problem. However, the **power in the hands of the managers** was apparent, with the ability to withdraw work summarily. It was only when the lecturer was in a stable financial position that the balance of power shifted towards them.

4.7 Findings summary

This chapter has identified the managers' and lecturers' perceptions and viewpoints surrounding the three superordinate themes of policy, working lives and power relationships (see 3.16), discussing the findings within the idiom themes and summarising each superordinate theme. The next chapter will review the findings with reference to the relevant literature and identify the gaps in the current research in relation to the research questions of the effect of casualisation upon the policy, working lives and power relationships of FE managers and lecturers.

5 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings connecting them to the research questions, viewed through the superordinate themes of policy, working lives and power relationships, the theoretical framework, and the extant literature reviewed. The theoretical framework comprises three elements: philosophical power theory, organisation dependency theories and social theories. The philosophical theory is based upon Foucault's "field of other possible actions" (Foucault, 1982, p. 791) and Parrhesia (Foucault, 2001; 2019) melded with the social theory of Standing's precariat (2008; 2014; 2016; 2018; 2023), and the organisation managerial dependent theories of Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) and Mechanic (1962) (see 2.9 and Figure 2.3)

The research questions are:

RQ1 - How is the policy of casualised employment experienced by academic managers and lecturers in English further education?

RQ2 - What are FE academic managers' perceptions and experiences of the effects of casualisation upon their FE working lives and relationships?

RQ3 - What are FE casual lecturers' perceptions and experiences of the effects of casualisation upon their FE working lives and relationships?

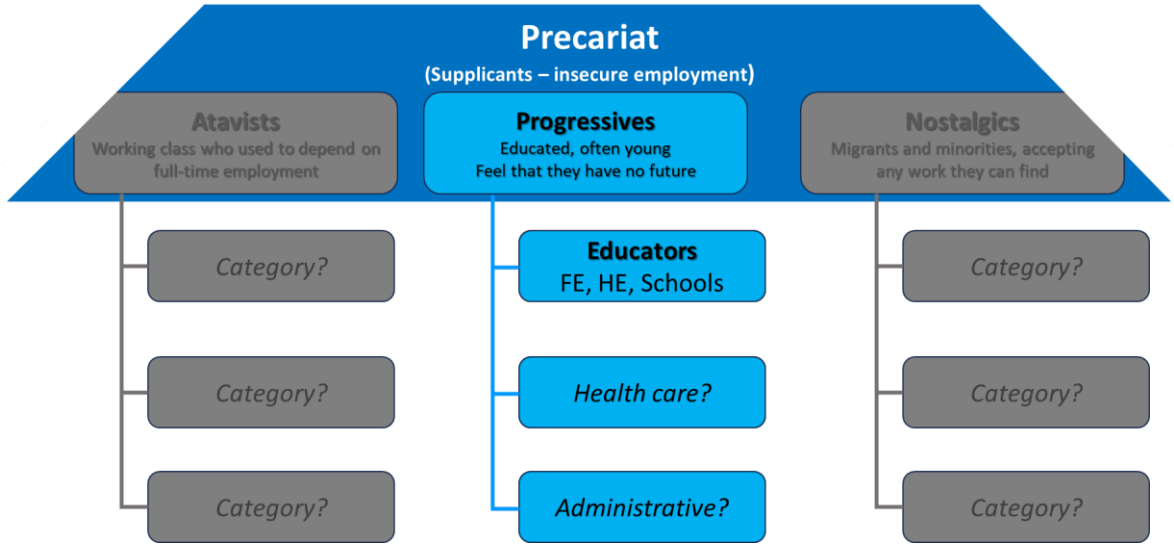
Each sub-heading specifies the research question to which it applies to.

5.2 The precariat and the casual FE lecturer (RQ1, RQ3)

Prior to data collection it was anticipated Standing's (2018) precariat-supplicants-progressives grouping would resonate with the FE lecturer participants' high levels of education and their casual employment status (see Figure 2.1), and the FE managers, with their permanent employment status and access to in-work benefits would be part of the salariat. If the casual lecturers, with over a fifth of the total FE lecturer workforce: 22% of the workforce in GFECs, 46% in OPFPs and 12% in SFCs in 2022/2023 (DfE, 2024) employed casually (see Table 2.3) were to join together to combine into a political force, a requirement to become the dangerous class of Standing's precariat (2021), the consequences could be disruptive. However, the findings demonstrate the FE lecturers, although generally discontent with their casual work situation (see 4.5), displayed no tendency or capacity to form a politicised force and extend this force throughout the wide

range of casual employees who would sit within the Progressive grouping. The **knife edge** insecurities they faced, coupled with the **stick being used** caused an inability to speak out (see 5.8) for fear of not being allocated further work, or **the carrot** of achieving a permanent role, appeared to denude this group of the ability to coalesce. This inability is not discussed specifically in the FE literature, although it echoes the views of Breman (2013) who articulates how the instability of casual work debilitates the capacity for collective action generally, and Millar (2017) who disputes the idea of a dangerous class. Equally, Manolchev, Saundry and Lewis' (2021) investigation of precariat-nostalgics, low paid workers in manual industries, found their participants did not display tendencies to group together or share similar political views. However, this grouping is not synonymous with the FE lecturers who appear to sit within the precariat-progressives and demonstrate different levels of pay and educational qualifications. There is limited research into the progressives grouping, particularly with regard to casual education employees.

Figure 5.1 - Suggested change to the precariat



As part of the theoretical framework Standing's precariat (2021), provides a useful class structural view to position the FE lecturers within, and helps to explicate the rise of casualisation and insecure work, within the changing class and wealth structures precipitated by neoliberal policies (see 2.1). However, furthering Alberti *et al.*'s (2018) assertion of the precariat three groupings containing too wide a range of employees, the groupings could be split into generic groups based on an overarching profession or work classification. These would be bound by their casual employment status and experiences, not their ability to become politicised and dangerous. For example, in the precariat-progressives, the FE lecturers could be included in a new grouping with other casualised

education professionals, e.g. schools and HE, as they display different properties such as term-time working, marking and preparation etc. than perhaps casual workers in other professions might, for example nursing or administration. Figure 5.1 shows a suggested extension to the precariat (as displayed in Figure 2.1). Not discussed here is the positioning of the managers within the salariat grouping however this, with the positioning of the FE lecturers, is an area for further research (see 6.2.3).

5.3 Experiences of the policy of casualisation (RQ1)

The policy of casualisation within FECs was shown to be perceived as an unstated, historic policy influenced by the difficulties in governmental FE funding policy. The lecturers believed casualisation policy to be culturally embedded from senior management downwards, rooted in the organisations, and they viewed the use and efficacy of these contracts in the FECs in which they worked was not questioned by senior management, and appeared to be an unwritten custom and practice policy. The managers on the lower rungs of the managerial hierarchy appeared to concur, either evidencing their acceptance of employing casual lecturers because they perceived they had little choice, or by displaying passive acceptance (see 4.4.4 and 5.7). There is mention in a 1998 Green Paper (DfEE, 1998) of the need for a mix of permanent FTE and casual lecturers to enable flexibility and up or down scaling, however, an actual stated policy of, and the drivers for, FE lecturer casualisation are not comprehensively studied within the current literature, and the views of the participants add to the limited body of extant work.

The marketisation of FE from the 1990s onwards provided competition to gain students upon courses, encouraging competition between FECs and funding following student retention and achievement (see 2.3). All participants recounted recurring financial difficulties experienced because FE funding policies encouraged the use of casualisation to allow for a fully flexible, disposable and inexpensive lecturing workforce to **balance the books** (see 4.4.1). O'Leary and Rami (2017) contemplate the effects of the reduction in FE budgets due to austerity from 2010 stating this led to a policy of casualisation to reduce salary costs and increased unpaid workload. However, prior to 2010 casualisation was prevalent within FE (Mather, Worral and Seifert, 2009) showing this to be a continuing trend from the 1990s. All the participants viewed the policy as a means of reducing costs, such as holiday pay, national insurance contributions and full-time equivalent salaries and lecturers were encouraged to work unpaid hours (see 4.4.1). Added to this, they thought fluctuations in course delivery requirements and student numbers increased the desire for

flexibility in lecturing hours' allocation. The views of FE managers and casual FE lecturers of their experiences of the policy of casualisation are not extensively recorded in FE literature and the participants' testimonies add to the limited research on how casualisation is perceived to affect working lives and relationships within the FE environment.

FE relies upon the government as their main source of income, enhanced by the end of incorporation (see 2.3.3) and reclassification into public ownership (DfE, 2022c). Governmental power over funding and government policies drive FE (Augur, 2019), and the continual reduction in FE funding (Moura and Tahir, 2024) dictate FE direction (FETL, 2021). This is demonstrated by the current IFS funding figures for 2024-2025 showing adult education 40% less than in 2009-2010, and 16–19-year-olds FEC funding 11% lower and school SFCs funding 23% lower than in 2010-2011 (Drayton *et al*., 2025) (see 2.3.3). In reality, the government is the only one major source of income. When viewed through the organisational element of the theoretical framework (see 2.9.2) the participants' views concur with Salancik and Pfeffer's (1977) consideration of a dependent organisation, one that is dependent upon one funding provider which leads to powerlessness for that organisation (see Figure 2.4). Arising from the interviews was the power and/or powerlessness to change the policy of casualisation driven by funding considerations dependent upon the participant's position within the organisation (see 4.4.1). The initial perceptions of policy and power from the managers and the lecturers appeared to reflect the typical top-down hierarchical institution as described by Pfeffer and Salancik's (2003) dependent organisation. The participants' descriptions and perceptions of the funding difficulties and their influence upon the use of casualisation also resonated strongly with Lukes' (2005) assertion that power is one body affecting another body, i.e. the Government exercising their power over the FE organisation. The dictation of power from government through the FE managerial hierarchy equates with the findings from the lecturers and the managers (see 4.4.5).

An interesting finding was the clearly stated managerial perception of the shift in policy from the 1990s changing from the primary focus being on the learners' needs, to the primary focus shifting to finances and processes (see 4.4.1). This view resonates with Bradley (1996) who argued the new funding systems encouraged FECs to enrol students on multiple courses in order to maximise funding. Equally Robson (1998) examined the impact of marketisation leading to the need to maximise student attendance and course

completion to achieve targets. The concentration upon maximising student numbers and achievements enforced a funding driven approach, with courses being closed when deemed uneconomically viable. As experienced by all participants, this placed lecturing hour allocation **power in the hands** of the managers (see 4.6.2). They all considered the policy of casualisation contributed to the difficulties in recruitment and retention of lecturers and concluded this was a disbenefit to the FECs as a whole (see 5.5). This could lead to a contradiction in the casualisation policy as the savings made could be subsumed arising from lower income generation by potential reduction in student outcomes, and student retention and recruitment.

The “long interview” (Gleeson, Davies and Wheeler, 2005, p. 450) policy of casualisation as a pathway into FE lecturing was borne out by the managers’ and the lecturers’ stories, with the **try before you buy** (see 4.4.3) having been experienced by all the managers at the start of their career, and the lecturers either at the start or during their FE career. The findings extend the current knowledge, showing the “long interview” could last almost indefinitely, in one case it had taken 16 years before a part-time permanent contract had been secured. This practice was discussed by the managers and considered a good route into FE, particularly with regard to student FE lecturers and a **try before you buy** for VET lecturers to move from industry into FE. The lecturers also spoke of how **the carrot** of permanent or further employment was dangled, explicitly or implicitly to keep them within the FECs (see 4.6.1).

Implicit in the findings (see 4.4.1) and apparent within the literature review (see 2.7) was the secondary status of FE to schools and HE, voiced by the participants as the lack of funding for FE and in the literature review of the implementation of many different government policies form a constant stream of new qualifications to imposition of performativity and performance management (see 2.3). The perception of the status of FE appears to be driven by it being seen as servicing lower levels of education and qualifications (O'Leary and Rami, 2017; Orr, 2020; Gadsby and Smith, 2023), and its economic importance, as discussed by O’Leary and Rami (2017), is misunderstood. It has also been suggested policy for FE is created by people who have not experienced it, therefore adding to the misunderstanding of its importance (Coffield, 2015; Avis and Reynolds, 2018). This is also seen in the pay for FE (see 2.4 and 5.4). However, perceptions of institutional status were not included in the questions for the participants in narrating

their experiences of the policy of casualisation and could be an area for future research (see 6.8).

5.4 FE Pay for casual lecturers (RQ1)

The remuneration of the casual lecturers created **knife edge** difficulties for the lecturers' working lives, and for the managers in recruitment and retention (see 4.5.1). The lecturers all discussed issues with pay, of note, was the lesser remuneration they received often by being given a lower pay scale than a permanent lecturer received or with no access to yearly increments (4.4.1 and 4.5.1). The pay rates for FE lecturers are lower than in any other education sector. The 2022/2023 lecturers' FTE median pay in GFECs was 22% lower than in SFCs (DfE, 2024) (see 2.4). The rates of pay within the OPFP and PSPF sectors, including prisons, councils, community, and private training providers was also low, the lowest being PSPF - median pay of £24,000 (see Table 2.1). The advertised pay rates taken from FEjobs (2023) on 07/09/2023 began at £23,565 per annum (see Table 2.2). The pay on the recommended pay scales (UCU, 2023b) for a permanent FE lecturer was also lower than for a schoolteacher (approximately £2000) or for an HE lecturer (approximately £10,000). For casual staff, potentially already receiving a lower pay rate than their permanent lecturing colleagues, the term-time-only contract also created further difficulties. They expected to receive pay for approximately 36-40 weeks of the year, and weekly teaching hours could vary or be removed creating financial insecurities not only in their present but also for their future prosperity as the weeks not working were not pensionable (see 4.5.1). Although the UCU (2019a) survey of casualised lecturers reported on the low pay received it did not comment upon the lesser pay the participants outlined in comparison to their permanent colleagues, nor the lack of yearly increments, and only two comments in the UCU survey were recorded regarding future pension worries. The literature details the pay difficulties of casual lecturers but does not explicitly reference the actual received pay of the lecturer participants. At the time of writing the FEWDC 2022/2023 (DfE, 2024), apart from in this thesis, research had not been found to be used to compare school and HE pay scales with FE lecturer pay in any current or subsequent journal articles or reports.

There is no current or historical official casual pay rate data for FE staff as this was not gathered in the mandatory FEWDC for 2022/2023 (DfE, 2024)**.** The approximate 2022/2023 zero-hours pay rate, including the administration uplift and holiday pay for a casual lecturer in a GFEC is £26 in comparison with a rate of £53 in HE (see 2.4). Actual zero-hour pay rates

from FEjobs (2023) on 07/09/2023 (unstated whether this included holiday pay or administration time) began at £14.13 per hour. Set against the experiences of casual HE lecturers and the financial problems they document (Loveday, 2018a; Loveday, 2018b; Leathwood and Read, 2020; Mason and Megoran, 2021), the much lower hourly rate points to an even worse, undocumented, scenario for the casual lecturers' finances (see 4.5.1 and 4.6.1). SFCs generally follow schoolteachers' pay and conditions, but PSPF and OPFPs set their own, and although GFECs are now under public control (DfE, 2022a) the FECs still set their own pay and renumeration policies.

5.5 Casualisation - recruitment and retention (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3)

With a lecturer vacancy rate of 4.7% (DfE, 2024) recruitment into FE is a major issue, particularly for VET subjects, hampered by low pay in comparison with schools and HE, and with industry (Hanley and Orr, 2019; Odejimi and Ekpenyong, 2019). There is a lack of research into FE lecturer recruitment and attrition, with casualisation only mentioned. Tully (2023) declares his study is the first one to fully investigate the reasons for difficulties in FE lecturer recruitment and retention. Flemons *et al.* (2024) in their NFER report investigating FE VET lecturer recruitment difficulties, concur with the limited availability of FE recruitment and retention literature. The even lower pay rate for the participants, and their **knife edge** financial experiences heavily influenced the lecturers' decisions to stay or remain. Three of the lecturers had already left for higher salaries (one to employment external to education, two to HE). One of the remaining lecturers wished to move to HE, and the other either to another FE position, to HE, or externally to a better paid job. This is reflected by Odejimi and Ekpenyong (2019) who found that FE lecturers' desired to move to HE for better remuneration, although they do not investigate whether casualisation was the reason. With more than one fifth of the FE lecturing workforce (DfE, 2024) on casual contracts and the lecturer participants' stories of their desire to achieve higher paid and more secure employment, coupled with the paucity of academic literature around FE casual pay rates and their effects, the pay for casual lecturers should, arguably, be commensurate with their FTE peers. There should be mandatory reporting on casual pay rates, and as GFECs have now been reincorporated there should be mandatory pay scales for all FE providers similar to schoolteacher pay policy. Equally, FE lecturer pay needs to be commensurate with either schoolteacher, or HE pay scales (see 6.4.1).

5.6 Decasualisation – don't kill the goose that lays the golden eggs (RQ1, RQ2)

A surprising finding, not discussed in the FE literature, was the discovery of the perceived beneficial policy of decasualisation actively being implemented in one FEC by the Chief Executive participant. All participants agreed the policy of casualisation could create problems within FECs generally considering a policy of decasualisation created a more productive, supportive working environment which benefitted management, staff and students (see 4.6.2). The hierarchical power invested in the Chief Executive, and the **knowing what it's like** experience of the managers being on casual contracts (see 4.5), enabled and influenced the implementation of a policy of employing new lecturers and converting existing zero-hours lecturers to either permanent full-time or permanent variable-hours contracts (see 4.4.4). Four positive effects, collated from the responses of all the participants, were offered in relation to decasualisation. Firstly, it made the management feel their FECs' lecturing workforce was more secure, the permanence of the permanent variable-hours contracts giving financial and employment stability to the lecturers, throughout the whole year. Secondly, this meant an established lecturing workforce was retained, one which was familiar with the curricular, the processes, the departments, and the staff, providing continuity for the students, and potentially helping student retention and outcomes. This was seen as benefitting the FEC as it would sustain or increase the year-on-year funding. Thirdly, it helped to allay retention difficulties as the lecturers displayed greater loyalty, were more committed to the FEC, integrated into the teams better, and were less likely to leave as they already had an albeit small, but permanent role. Finally, although there was an acknowledgement casual lecturers could be less expensive to appoint on an 'as-and-when' basis, it helped to remove the **any port in a storm** difficulties (see 4.4.2) of using unknown casual lecturers, or lecturers without knowledge of the subject areas, as the management was able to increase hours or decrease back to the original contract, if needed. This aided course planning and lesson delivery. As a caveat, the argument was advanced that lecturers with low contracted hours on permanent variable-hours contracts could show the same reluctances to integrate as the zero-hours lecturers (see 4.5.2). The Executive's unusual policy decision to decasualise lecturing staff can be observed through the theoretical framework philosophies of Foucault's (1982) "The subject and power." The resistance to apparently normal practice in FECs of the use of term-time-only variable-hours or zero-hours lecturers reflects Foucault's "field of other possible actions" (Foucault, 1982, p. 791) and power for change

was exercised, enabling the modification not only of others, in the form of providing greater security for the lecturers, but of the FEC itself. This also resonates with Ball and Olmedo (2013) when viewing the difficulties of subjugation and performativity raised by teachers and managers told through email exchanges (see 2.9.1); there was an acceptance of the position the teachers and managers found themselves in, whereas in this situation management took control. The actions of this FEC management appear to reflect "the care of the self" (Ball and Olmedo, 2013, p. 86), when although the person is influenced by the circumstances surrounding them, in this instance the policy of government funding and the unspoken policy of casualisation, to reduce cost, they have agency to control their own identity, and therefore the situation. Not only did the FEC's senior management's actions influence their lecturers, managers and students, but also drew upon their own personal experiences prior to being in a position of power.

5.7 Managers - power, and working lives and relationships (RQ2)

An unexpected, seemingly original, finding was the conflict the managers felt due to their own experiences of casualisation. Their struggle, to differing degrees, with the actualisation of employing casual lecturers was apparent as **they knew what it's like** and could empathise with the **living on a knife edge** difficulties faced by the casual lecturers (see 4.5.1). This was incongruous with their managerial position, and their organisation's need to continue casualisation and provide a service for their students. There was a disinclination to ask casual lecturers to take on additional unremunerated work, and a shared understanding of the stresses; financial and personal, casual lecturers faced. The conflict they felt is seemingly reflected in Ball's (2016) examination of the mental conflict senior school leaders experienced when faced with the diktat of the implementation of policies increasing accountability, leading to performativity. Even though they did not wish to subject their staff to the policy, they felt they had no agency to refuse. The article references Foucault's theories on truths and refusals, and parrhesia (Foucault, 2001; 2019), and how this applies to their struggle with performativity and truth telling. Foucault's Fearless speech and Parrhesia (2001; 2019) lectures, allegorically using Greek aristocratic class structure to convey the ability to speak out as being limited by one's place in society (2.9.1). This was reflected by the managers who occupied the lower rungs of the FE hierarchy being unable to voice their concerns or influence the casualisation policies (see 4.6.2), analogously reverberating with the managers' struggles with their own experiences of casualisation. However, they were able to exercise power in how they chose to treat the

casual (and permanent) lecturers, and how and to whom they allocated work. When viewed through the theoretical framework (2.9.1) of Foucauldian philosophy of the "field of other possible actions" (1982, p. 791) the managers' conflicts echo the second definition of Foucault's use of the word 'subject' – they, in a sense, became the subject of the power relationship to the extent that their own experiences and knowledge of the aspects of casualisation influenced the decisions they took with regard to their treatment of the casual staff, thus influencing their own working lives. This also illuminates the interplay of the personal choice of the managers in their decisions to exercise their power to **dangle the carrot or use the stick**, or integrate the casual lecturer into the department.

The lecturers responded to their treatment by their manager preferring when they were treated as part of the team, and by being more loyal to, and accepting work from the managers they perceived treated them well (see 4.7.2). This finding of the conflict for the managers of understanding the challenges for the casual lecturers, and how it affected their power relationships, does not seem to be in the FE literature nor that surrounding managing casualisation in general. Archer, Pajo and Lee (2013) when interviewing casual workers, some of whom were teachers, discussed their relationships depended upon the manager, and Ryan, Connell and Burgess (2017) when interviewing Australian HE managers reported it was manager discretion which predicated work allocation. However, there is little research into the management of FE casual lecturers, and no policy or training of the responsibilities of how to manage casual employees appears to exist. Further research could enable the development of a potential policy of training managers in good practice towards the management of FE casual lecturers (see 6.7 and 6.8).

Apparent in the findings were the challenges in managing the departments with a casual lecturing workforce. There were difficulties in team integration with the managers experiencing high levels of work, and the need to allocate additional work to their permanent lecturers or themselves, due to the conflicts they felt when asking lecturers to perform unpaid work, the nature of the casual contract or when casual lecturers left. This created **weak links in the chain** within the teams, causing stress and demanding work-life balances for the managers, and their permanent lecturers (see 4.6.2). Adding to this, the use of agency staff was disliked (see 4.5.2). The managers referenced high costs, and a lack of professionalism, commitment and experience in their subject area by the agency staff they had employed, regarding them to be **any port in a storm** but not one which they chose to go to. An apparent new finding was the lecturers' concurrence of these views. All

participants thought the use of agency staff was of disbenefit to the students and the organisation, and for the managers and their permanent lecturers it increased their workloads when they had to cover the classes when either the agency lecturer left suddenly or had to be asked to leave. Runge, Hudson-Sharp and Rolfe (2017) presented school managers concerns regarding the quality and commitment of agency teachers creating problems with continuity of education and engagement. Equally, Hanley and Orr (2019) conveyed similar challenges faced by FE managers with agency lecturers. Yet, the limited literature from the managerial standpoint on the use of casual academic staff appears to concentrate on agency staff rather than on directly employed casual staff. Archer, Pajo and Lee (2013) include education as one of their five industries when reviewing casual worker relationships with their managers, and Ryan, Connell and Burgess (2017) investigated the management of Australian casual academics in HE. However, there is a dearth of literature examining the stories of FE managers managing casual lecturers. Although similarities exist between FE, HE and schools, in FE the numerous types and changing lengths of courses, the multiplicity of the departments, the year-on-year fluctuations in the student body, and the staffing needs for these are arguably, very different between the three sectors, and demand further FE specific investigation (see 6.8).

5.8 Lecturers - power, and working lives and relationships (RQ3)

The lecturers revealed a subjugation, a lack of ability to modify their situations subdued by the hierarchy in which they were in, unable to exercise their own power or implement the choices they thought should happen, their own identity subsumed by their casual position. Discussed in the philosophical framework (see 2.9.1) the first Foucauldian (1982) definition of being a subject of a power relationship is to be subjected to the power exertions of another through dependency. This applied to the lecturers' subjugation; they were dependent upon the FE organisation and their manager to supply them with the means to live and provide them with work in their chosen profession. The latter also placed them within the second definition of subject - to be subjected to one's own "conscience or self-knowledge" (Foucault, 1982, p. 781). Their own self-knowledge of what they wished for their career caused them to accept (however unwillingly) the lecturer casual contract to remain within FE lecturing. The reasons behind the desire to remain as an FE lecturer and the willingness to do this even if via an unwelcome contract of employment for the casual lecturer, particularly with the participants who all spent many years employed casually is not currently understood (see 6.8) but professional love for the job was referenced by the

lecturers, and the conflict and tensions they felt when wishing to do their best for their student, academically and pastorally. A similarity can be seen in the discussion by Gadsby and Smith (2023) when contemplating how the actions of the lecturers and their professional love conflict against the promoted self-interest of meritocracy and neoliberalism as applied to FE.

Another unexpected finding was the extent to which casualisation subjugated the lecturers by their position of financial instability, and the removal of choice even of what car they could drive or where they could live. The lecturers suffered severe financial hardships and instability, with difficulties accessing financial products such as mortgages and loans, or renting a property. The consequences of this upon the lives of the casual lecturers were worrying, infantilising them, comparable to the dehumanisation experienced by HE lecturers discussed by Mason and Megoran (2021). This seemed worse given the high levels of qualifications the lecturers held. The lecturers all reported **the stick** of financial instability and fear of not being given further work forced them to accept work they were not qualified in, work not commensurate with their job title or remuneration, or working across multiple employments. Although this is evidenced in Irish FE casualisation by Fitzsimons, Henry and O'Neill (2022), briefly referenced by O'Leary and Rami (2017), and more detailed in the UCU (2019a) questionnaire survey, this finding significantly adds to current research by providing a richness of description of English FE casualisation through the stories of experience from the lecturers' perspective.

Status issues, and a lack of professional identity ascribed to their position as a casual lecturer was conveyed by all the lecturers. Comparable feelings were related by casual FE graduate teachers interviewed by O'Neill and Fitzsimmons (2020) when discussing how they were perceived differently by their schoolteacher graduate compatriots, and the little access they had to professional development. Goldhawk (2024) identified difficulties with part-time lecturers accessing professional development opportunities, and the part-time nature of their employments also caused problems in establishing their professional identity. The findings from the lecturers demonstrate a similarity but display a greater, more insidious problem; the lecturers were employed casually by their (sometimes multiple) FECs over long periods ranging from three to 15 years. All expressed feelings of exclusion and a perceived lower status by their permanent colleagues, with limited access to communications and training (see 4.5.1). For one fifth (DfE, 2024) of the lecturing workforce to operate over extended periods of time when perceiving they are not

appreciated or considered an integral part of the organisation is unacceptable for the lecturer, and of disbenefit to the FEC and to the student body, exacerbating the issues and difficulties related by the managers with workforce integration and the smooth running of the FECs. The combination of feelings of exclusion and second classness, with the financial and job insecurity stresses, and the need to accept any work in any FE left the lecturers' well-being and mental health in poor condition. Coupled with this was their inability to be able to speak out, to have a voice and exercise parrhesia (Foucault, 2001; 2019).

Foucault discusses parrhesia as the capacity to use speak out and truth-tell (Foucault, 2001; 2019) using classical literature to illuminate the ability to voice one's opinions afforded by one's place in society (see 2.9.1). The instability of the casual lecturers' employment position, and their total dependence upon their manager allocating work was seen to remove their parrhesia, and, as stated by all the lecturers, they felt powerless to speak out, on occasion needing to be a "flatterer" (Foucault, 2001, p. 134) to maintain a good relationship with the management to be rewarded with teaching hours, or permanent work (see 4.6.1). This appeared to move the lecturers from being a Foucauldian 'subject' to being a Foucauldian 'slave' (Foucault, 1982) by chaining the lecturer to casual working conditions by means of financial instability and removing any ability to refuse or object. Archer, Pajo and Lee's (2013) study of New Zealand casual workers, including teachers, and Ryan, Connell and Burgess' (2017) study of HE academic managers from Australia found similar results; their participants commenting upon preserving good relationships with managers to ensure they were provided with further work. Smith and O'Leary (2013) touch upon the removal of parrhesia (Foucault, 2001; 2019) with the pressing need for anonymity for their student FE lecturer participants in case participation affected their future employment opportunities. The need for anonymity was strongly voiced during the recruitment of the lecturer participants and reiterated in the interviews. Their fear of identification was profound and the difficulties in recruiting casual lecturer participants could also be seen as a fear reaction. This research extends the findings of subjugation and fearfulness within FE lecturer casualisation, displaying the gagging effect of the lecturer participants working conditions and subjugation by fear of not being given work, and the professional and financial consequences of this. Particularly when related to the already low pay they received, over a limited number of weeks a year, and their future finances (see 5.4) their subjugation and its negative parrhesiatic effect is unsurprising.

However, arguably, the casual lecturers did wield some power. They could refuse to work, or leave rapidly, if better terms and conditions were offered. They also detailed their ability when teaching an in-demand subject to increase their remuneration or dictate their working hours (see 4.6.2). When it was a manager they did not respect they found power in being able to refuse work (see 5.7). This placed the **power in their hands**, reversing the manager's exertion of power and subjugation, and enabling them to express themselves. This allowed them parrhesia (Foucault, 2001; 2019), with the lecturers speaking out and choosing a different possible option by exercising their own power and responses to the managerial power exertion and moved them from slave to the first definition of Foucauldian subject, that of the manager being subjected to power through dependency upon the casual lecturer (Foucault, 1982). This changed the power direction upwards from the lecturer to the manager, and reflects the theoretical framework of Mechanic's (1962) organisation dependent relationship model, where the manager is reliant upon the knowledge and skills of the lower employee (see Figure 2.5).

A further finding, seemingly undocumented in FE literature, demonstrating the reversal of power was related by the lecturers. The casual contract allowed extended holidays over the summer period, and the casual contract enabled the refusal of work, and having control over where, what, when and which work they chose to accept. *The Taylor Review* (2017) discusses flexibility as a positive for employees, although the assertion of power imbalances in this review generally only applies to low-skilled workers and does not resonate with the power imbalances shown by the lecturers who are highly skilled. A caveat was the power reversals were only possible when the lecturer had financial security, or they were offered work elsewhere, and could leave at will.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the research questions through a discussion of the findings in relation to literature and utilising the tripartite theoretical framework of Foucauldian philosophy (Foucault, 1982; 2001; 2019), Standing's (2008; 2014; 2016; 2018; 2023) social class theory of the precariat and the organisational dependency theories of Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) and Mechanic (1962).

In answering **RQ1** of how the policy of casualisation was experienced by the managers and lecturers it was first viewed through the social class theory of the precariat's progressive class. (Standing, 2008; 2014; 2016; 2018; 2023). This was deemed to be an insightful theory to explain the rise of the policy of FE casualisation, although the theory appeared to be

limited by its demand for the lecturers to band together to form a collective politic, and suggestions were made as to how the theory could be amended. Secondly, in answer to **RQ1** it was agreed the policy of casualisation was unstated, and historically embedded, predicated by the need to reduce spend due to the lack of funding for FE – viewed through the organisational dependency theory (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003) this displayed FE dependent upon one funder, the government, which rested the power hierarchically from the government downward. FE pay was investigated, demonstrating the low pay for FE in comparison with other education, utilising a range of statistics, and this was the first to use the FEWDC data for 2022/2023 (DfE, 2024). The findings also showed the casual lecturers were often paid on a lower scale than their permanent colleagues. This led to a call for transparency in the casual lecturer pay data. Following from this, and in answer to all three research questions the effects of casualisation on recruitment and retention of lecturing staff was explored. It was clear from the findings casual lecturers wanted permanent, secure employment and were willing to leave to achieve this. An interesting finding, and an answer to recruitment and retention was a policy of decasualisation which had been previously implemented in one of the FECs and this was understood to be beneficial to the FEC in lecturer retention, increased student achievement and less student attrition, which aided the FEC to sustain and gain its year-on-year funding.

The policy of decasualisation also helped to answer **RQ2** which asked how FE managers perceived, and were affected by, casualisation in their working lives and relationships. Surprisingly, none of the managers appeared to like employing casual lecturers, in particular agency lecturers. Viewed through the Foucauldian (Foucault, 1982; 2001; 2019) framework (see 2.9.1) the lecturers on the lower managerial echelons seemed to display a parrhesiatic (Foucault, 2001; 2019) speechlessness with little agency to influence decisions from above (Foucault, 1982). This also demonstrated the dependent organisation of Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) where the flow of power is dictated from above. Another interesting finding was their conflict in the use of casual lecturers as they all had been on a form of casual contract at the start of their careers, and had experienced, and understood, the difficulties the casual lecturers faced. This moved them into the second definition of Foucault's (1982) subject as their own understanding of the casual lecturers' working lives limited their ability to ask them to perform work for which they were unremunerated. This created stresses and problems for themselves, and their permanent lecturers as the additional work fell upon them. This could be an area for further research, and not

examined was the effect on permanent lecturers of working alongside casual lecturers and this could be an area for further research.

RQ3 examined the perceptions and effects of casualisation upon the lecturers. Similarly to the managers their stories were viewed through the Foucauldian framework (see 2.9.1). The lecturers were found to be unable to speak out (Foucault, 2001; 2019) for fear of not being allocated work, or achieving a permanent contract (Foucault, 1982). A disturbing finding, and one which extends the limited picture of FE lecturer casualisation in the literature, was the extent to which their finances, both current and future, were affected. Equally disturbing were the findings of valuelessness, powerlessness and mental health issues brought about by how they perceived they were viewed as lesser than the permanent lecturers, and their inability to find permanent employment, and the stresses of living on a knife edge of unknowing. A more positive finding for the lecturers, but not for the managers was when the power was reversed. Viewed through Mechanic (1962) dependent relationship theory the findings (see 2.9.2) showed the managers were dependent upon the lecturers, and the lecturers, if they did not have a good relationship with the manager were willing to demonstrate their power to refuse (Foucault, 1982), and accept work elsewhere. This, however, was only if the lecturer was not reliant upon the FE for their income.

The final chapter examines the extent to which the research questions have been answered and details the research's contribution to knowledge. Recommendations for professional practice are put forward as are suggestions for future research. Finally, I reflect upon my doctoral journey and my own professional learning.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

Influenced by my own personal story and a gap in existing literature, this study has investigated the policy of casualisation and the perceived effects it has on the working lives and relationships of five managers and five lecturers (including myself) within FE. Casualisation has been shown to cause significant challenges within the FE sector, although this has been sparsely researched.

The findings paint a vivid picture of the current effects on the managers and lecturers of the chaotic policies experienced in FE for decades. FE has been viewed as a poor sister to schools and HE, overlooked by policy-makers who have limited experience of FE, its key role in the economy, the changes it makes to students' lives and the importance of the qualifications it delivers misunderstood (Coffield, 2015; Petrie, 2015; 2017; O'Leary and Rami, 2017; Augur, 2019; Avis and Reynolds, 2018; Orr, 2020; Gadsby and Smith, 2023). It has been subjected to year-on-year policy change, funding changes, curriculum and qualification changes, Ofsted requirements, government reporting requirements, and the challenges of competition (see 2.3). This has led to uncertainty, instability and insecurity within FE and is reflected in the use of casual lecturing staff.

This chapter commences with how, and the extent to which, each research question has been answered. This is followed by the contribution to knowledge, and recommendations for professional practice and further research. The contribution of the use of idiom themes and the participatory interview are also deliberated upon. The thesis concludes with a reflection on my own story of the professional doctoral journey and how it has influenced my career and personal learning.

6.2 RQ1 - How is the policy of casualised employment experienced by academic managers and lecturers in English further education?

In answering **RQ1** investigating the manager's and lecturers' experiences of the policy of FE casualisation, a new finding was the similarity of views demonstrated through the narratives of the lecturers and the managers. They universally considered the policy arose due to the challenges in FE funding implemented by central government over a long period of time. This created the need to reduce the budget impact of staffing levels. Casualisation, particularly term-time-only or zero-hour contracts, decreased the associated employer costs of holiday pay, employers' national insurance, pension contributions, redundancy

when courses were not viable if student numbers fell, and enabling the rapid appointment of lecturers if courses were over-subscribed. The participants also discussed an implicit or explicit policy of reducing staffing costs by requiring casual lecturers to perform additional unpaid duties, for example, mandatory training, lesson planning, marking and moderation.

6.2.1 Decasualisation works

In response to **RQ1, 2 and 3**, it was found the policy of casualisation was not beneficial to the FE organisation affecting the working lives and relationships of the managers and lecturers. This was unexpectedly evidenced in the stories of the managers as well as the lecturers and confirmed by the managerial implementation of a policy of decasualisation in one of the FECs (prior to the research). This has not been investigated in the field of FE and warrants further research.

Figure 6.1 - Positives of decasualisation

Growing out of the stories of the managers **knowing what it's like** to be on a casual contract, this policy, as a way of not myopically **killing the goose that lays the golden eggs** (see Figure 6.1) helped retention and maintenance of a stable lecturing workforce and aided the establishment of a more nurturing culture within the FEC. Having a stable basis of permanent full-time and part-time lecturing staff was reported to have led to increased student achievement and student retention, therefore benefitting the students learning, and the FEC financially. The ability to increase the hours of the part-time lecturers as and

when required also benefitted the FEC by removing the need to recruit external unknown casual lecturers. However, it was found lecturers on very low hours part-time variable contracts could display and experience the same difficulties as the zero-hours lecturers, and this warrants further research, particularly in light of the future new employment laws (see 6.2.2). The stability created by the decasualisation policy enables lecturers to be a full part of the team, integrating into the departments, understanding the processes, systems and syllabi, and affords more time for them to develop their professional identities and engage in personal development. For the lecturers it helps to negate the bleak cycle of hope and despair, worrying whether they will be allocated teaching hours, searching for additional work, continually striving to sustain a financially viable position, hoping for permanence and feeling left out and second class.

6.2.2 New government zero-hours policy

At the time of the interviews and data collection the Conservative government were in power. There was no suggestion, even after the *Taylor Review* (2017) into good work, and *The Augur Review* (2019) highlighting the academic staffing problems in FE, of banning zero-hours contracts. However, in July 2024 the Labour government was elected, having promised a raft of new worker rights (Labour, 2024). In October 2024 *The Employment Rights Bill* (2024), was introduced proposing ending zero-hours contracts by legally requiring employers to offer permanent contracts based on a 12-week reference period, and legal rights to payment for cancellation, curtailment or movement of shifts. However, the Bill's main target sectors are hospitality, health and social care, and retail which could make translation to the FE (and HE) sector difficult. In FE, in every 12-week reference period, there are generally holidays where casual lecturers do not work. Also, there are provisions in Section 27BB (9) which discuss a "limited-term contract" where an employer can consider whether the worker is only needed for a certain task, or until an event has completed or failed, or if there is a temporary need which the employer can specify. With term-time-only contracts, uncertainty in course delivery, fluctuations in student numbers and course cancellations the exception provisions stated could potentially be applied to FE zero-hours, or even term-time-only variable-hours contracts.

6.2.3 The precariat

The theoretical framework using Standing's precariat (2021) was useful to view the reasoning for the rise in the policy of casualisation, and fitting to perceive the lecturer grouping through, placing them in the progressives grouping. However, it was found the

lecturers did not coalesce politically, and it seemed their powerlessness caused by their job and financial insecurity denuded them of the ability to group together. Therefore, it was considered they could not become the dangerous class put forward in the social class theory (see 5.2). The inability for precariat groupings to form together has been discussed in the literature (Alberti *et al*., 2018; Manolchev, Saundry and Lewis, 2021) (see 2.1), although these did not investigate the progressives grouping in which the FE lecturers would reside. Further research is recommended (see 6.8).

6.3 RQ2 - What are FE academic managers' perceptions and experiences of the effects of casualisation upon their FE working lives and relationships?

In answering **RQ2** it was apparent that casualisation was perceived to negatively affect the working lives of the managers and their relationships. Surprisingly, none of the managers seemed to like casualisation, particularly the use of agency staff. Higher in the hierarchical structure the ability to influence was demonstrated by the decasualisation policy (see 5.6). Lower down the managers seemed denuded of the ability to influence policy decisions, having to implement policies they disagreed with, and taking on additional work so as not to overload the casual staff (see 5.8). This placed them in a position of Foucauldian impossibility of refusal (Foucault, 1982) and care of the self, described by Ball and Olmedo (2013), and they had little agency to effect change. One of the surprises was the managers **knowing what it's like** for the lecturer participants as they had experienced employment on casual contracts. This left the managers in an invidious position creating conflict as they understood the position in which the casual lecturers were in, and this, to an extent dictated what they wished to ask the lecturer to do. They had to choose to either allocate unpaid work to the casual lecturer or overburden their permanent lecturers, and themselves. This caused resentment from the permanent lecturers who deemed the casual lecturers should perform the work, and defiance from the casual lecturers who deemed it was not their work to perform. The conflict discussed by the managers is a new contribution to knowledge, as is their dislike of casualisation and their understanding of the difficulties faced by the casual lecturers (see 6.6).

6.4 RQ3 - What are FE casual lecturers' perceptions and experiences of the effects of casualisation upon their FE working lives and relationships?

6.4.1 FE casual lecturer pay and conditions

In answering **RQ1** and **RQ3** the policy of FE pay and casualisation affected the renumeration of the lecturers leading to financial difficulties for them, (see 5.4 and 5.8) and added to the

killing the goose that laid the golden eggs policy issue of recruitment and retention for the managers (see 5.6). There are currently, and have been historically, calls by the unions for government to implement a fair FE pay policy. UCU's campaign "A new deal for FE" (UCU, 2024) seeks pay parity with schoolteacher pay for GFEC lecturers, and binding national agreements. FE pay for permanent lecturers is considerably lower than other education sectors with advertised salaries in 2022/2023 starting from £23,565 (FEJobs, 2023), compared with the national starting salary for schoolteachers in 2022/2023 of £28,000 (DfE, 2022b) (5.4). The schoolteachers' pay increase of 5.5% for the year 2024/2025 was not translated to FE lecturers (Lewis and Plaskitt, 2024). In reply to the criticism from the unions and the AoC, the government recently announced a unique grant of £50 million to help to increase FE lecturer pay, however, as this is a one-off grant it could lead to funding difficulties for the following year (Camden, 2025).

The lecturer participants **lived on a knife edge**, experiencing lower pay than their permanent employee counterparts, and a lack of yearly increments was also narrated. Additionally, on zero-hours or term-time-only variable-hours contracts they expected to receive pay for approximately 36-40 weeks of the year, with their weekly paid hours varying to meet the FEC's needs, and no hours given during the holiday periods. Financially, in the present (mortgages, loans etc) and for the future (pensions) they were in a precarious position (see 4.5.1), leading to further feelings of insecurity and the desire to find permanent employment. This is an area for further research.

Pay scales in general in GFECs, OPFC and PSPFs need to be on a parity with SFCs and schoolteacher pay, or relative to HE pay scales. Currently, although GFECs have been incorporated, pay scales are still set from college to college. The figures used in the thesis were the relevant ones for 2022/2023 at the time of the interviews (DfE, 2024).

6.4.2 Status, working lives and power relationships

The casual lecturers felt a lacking in status and resented their casualness from a professional viewpoint displaying a powerlessness in their employment situation. Not being employed over the non-teaching periods made it difficult for them to integrate into the teams, attend meetings, access personal development, and plan and develop schemes of work, lessons and curriculum. They were often expected to do these activities unpaid (see 5.8). They felt treated as second class citizens, yet were highly qualified and experienced, which caused resentment. They suffered stress and poor mental well-being by the financial problems, job insecurity, continual hope for more or permanent work.

Stress increased as they often worked for multiple providers, delivering multiple subjects and qualifications, some of which they were not qualified in. They were unable to speak out for fear of not being allocated work or not achieve permanent employment, demonstrating a lack of parrhesia, their place in the FE society dictated by their precarity (Foucault, 2001; 2019). This fear had also been highlighted in their fearfulness of identification (see 3.5) which placed them in the Foucauldian situation of being a slave (Foucault, 1982), being chained by their financial instability and fear for their current and future employment.

Notable, however, was the power the lecturers felt they did wield, and worrying for management was how they viewed, and performed work, for individual managers, dependent upon their relationships. Their power was to refuse to attend meetings, refuse additional work, choose to work for other employers or leave displaying Foucault's first definition of subject by their ability to exert control upon the manager (Foucault, 1982). From the organisational viewpoint this changed the relationship to Mechanic's (1962) dependent relationship model, where the manager is reliant upon the knowledge and skills of the lower employee. However, this power could be wielded only if they were financially secure.

6.5 Extent to which the research questions have been answered.

In contemplating the managers' and lecturers' experience of casualisation it was apparent that there was no stated policy of casualisation which, with over the official figure of 21% (DfE, 2024) of the lecturer workforce on casual contracts it seems there should be. The fluctuations in funding and historic embedded NPM-driven need to cut costs appears to dictate reacting rather than create a forward-looking strategic policy. Where the policy was stated (decasualisation) it appeared there was a clearer vision for FE. **RQ1** was also enwrapped in answering **RQ2** and **RQ3**, and as new contributions to knowledge have been demonstrated in the research **RQ1** was answered effectively. However, further research based around FE lecturer decasualisation, and casual pay policy is suggested, and the lecturers and managers were not asked for actual casual pay scales.

In answering **RQ2 and RQ3**, the relationships and working lives of and between both participant groups were examined thoroughly, and the rich descriptions obtained from their stories displayed a multiplicity of views and experiences, and interesting extensive findings were noted. With a larger sample size it could have been possible other viewpoints

may have been gathered, and the areas for further research identified indicate other areas that could have been reviewed which are not included in the research questions.

Initially, I had intended to analyse the lecturer data in terms of gender, age and subjects taught. However, given the fear of the lecturers in being identified this was not possible and these criteria had to be anonymised. A larger UCU (2019a) study had already been published from an online questionnaire, but this did not provide the rich descriptions that were possible to achieve by using a smaller sample for hour long plus semi-structured interviews, nor did the UCU study gather managers' viewpoints.

6.6 Contributions to knowledge

6.6.1 Contributions from the stories of the participants

Relatively undocumented in FE research are the responses to **RQ1** from all participants. They concurred the policy of casualisation as being necessitated by the funding challenges in FE to reduce pay costs and the HR obligatory burden of legal terms and conditions. However, even with the legal employment changes (see 6.2.2) passing through parliament erstwhile to remove zero-hours contracts the research is still relevant. With the uncertainty surrounding how the new laws could apply to FE lecturer employment this research could be used to add to the discussions taking place around the potential implementation of the Bill (DBT, 2024) once on the statute books.

A further contribution to knowledge was the identification of FE lecturers not banding to form a disruptive force, and the proposal to amend the precariat. Equally, the suggestion put forward to accommodate not only the FE lecturers but potentially other professions by splitting the Progressive grouping into generic groups is new. The groups would be based on an overarching profession and bound by their casual employment status and experiences, not their ability to become politicised. For example, education, and possibly health and social care, and administration (see Figure 5.1) could become separate generic groupings of casual workers.

Also new to the FE field of research are the answers to **RQ2.** The managers' empathy with the casual lecturers narrated through their own personal experiences created conflict for them, and only when in an executive position did they seem able to change the casualisation policy. Again, absent from FE literature is the managers' dislike of and difficulties in employing and managing casual lecturers. As a contribution to knowledge the discovery and detailing of the positives identified from the implementation of a

decasualisation policy, partially from the manager's personal experience of being employed casually, is important. This can be used as an example of how decasualisation works and help acceptance from FE management for decasualisation to not be seen as a mandatory enforcement of the law, but as a positive beneficial policy for FE.

In answering **RQ1** and **RQ3**, at the time of writing this thesis, the FEWDC 2023/2024 (DfE 2024) pay scales for casual lecturers had not been utilised in the currently literature, and the research identified the sparse disparity between the rates of pay within FE, the hourly rates of casual FE and HE lecturers, and the research added to the comparisons between pay rates for permanent FE lecturers with schoolteachers. Future financial difficulties were also identified, for example pensions which has not been thoroughly investigated in the FE literature. It was also identified there was no official data for FE casual pay rates.

In response to **RQ3** the extent of their subjugation and their lack of ability to speak out was disturbing. Although covered by some literature this research has revealed an insidious side to the effects of casualisation, with the realisation of the shocking difficulties in which the lecturers found themselves. It has also evidenced how little research has been conducted surrounding casual lecturers. Even if not viewing the tales of the lecturers from a social justice viewpoint, that the casual employee feels infantilised, gagged, and valueless, the lecturers are the **geese that lay the golden eggs**, without them students are unable to achieve, courses cannot be staffed, and funding cannot be drawn down. The harsh critique of the consequences of casualisation for the lecturers, particularly in their attitudes to the management, and loyalty to the organisation should be worrying for any customer-facing organisation. A further contribution to knowledge is the identification of the power the lecturer could wield when not reliant upon the FEC as their sole source of income, or when offered work elsewhere, or unhappy with their employment/managerial situation, and the disruptive effects this could have upon the management and the FEC, particularly when looking at it from the point of view of the lecturer.

6.6.2 The use of idioms as sub-themes in the analysis and findings

The use of idioms as themes is a new contribution to knowledge. Using the idioms enabled the compression of the complicated and often emotional data gathered from the managers and the lecturers into a succinct, recognisable phrase (Wray and Perkins, 2000). Although the idioms and their context within the analysis and findings are explained within the text, they are phrases which aid a shared understanding of the representation of the themes, condensing and accentuating the concepts under a lexical shorthand used to describe

subjects which are difficult to explain concisely (Erman and Warren, 2000; Miller, 2020). Descriptive themes have been used in thematic literature (Finlay and Payman, 2013; Phillips and Zavros, 2013; Probst, 2016; Loveday, 2018a; Finlay, 2021) and, when using reflexive TA, Braun *et al*. (2023) state the theme name should capture the story being told. However, I had not come across the use of idioms as themes and was uncertain whether to proceed. Finlay (2021), and Braun and Clarke (2023) agree the themes used should represent the research design, and my choice of idiom themes to bring figurative language in illustrating the narrative research and autoethnographical data was fitting. This created a new way to view theme choice and helped to structure the data and harmoniously entwine the threads of the interviews.

6.6.3 The use of autoethnography and self-interview

Autoethnography, and being a participant within the research, has become more prevalent in narrative research. A recent blog issue by BERA (2025) addressing perceptions encompassing the use of autoethnography demonstrates several authors who have used this approach in their work. In her contribution to the blog Hanrahan (2025), researching the lived experiences of nuns (Hanrahan, 2023), discusses the impossibility for her to remove herself from her research and portrays herself as a participant. This was the situation in which I found myself, yet I also wished to participate as an interviewee, not just convey my story through a written response. Although being personally interviewed is not standard within autoethnography I found it extremely useful and would recommend it for professional practice and for future research. There are precedents (see 3.3), whether the researcher uses standard autoethnographical approaches to write their story into the findings and considers themselves a participant as seen in Kirkman's (1999) and Hanrahan's research (2023), or the more unusual where researchers participate in the interview (Probst, 2016; Buys *et al*., 2022) However, it is not a common approach and barely referenced in the literature. Being interviewed by a trained counsellor using the same lecturer participant interview questions helped me to clarify my thoughts on the nature of my casual employments, the challenges they caused, and the effect upon my working life and relationships with the FECs and the managers who had employed me. I was interviewed after I had interviewed all the other participants therefore had to carefully reflect upon whether my responses were influenced by and elaborated upon what I had already heard from the participants. Consciously, I do not think that I was summarising the previous interviews, although sub-consciously it could have been possible. Prior to any

interviews taking place I had already written the section of the Introduction (see 1.2) pertaining to my casual FE employment experiences, so I hoped this would help to allay subjective creep from the other interviewees' responses within my own interview. When writing the findings I was careful to rarely use my data to summarise the thoughts of the other lecturer interviewees to negate an unconscious regurgitation of their responses.

I feel being interviewed helped me to coalesce and gather my responses in a different way to sitting down and writing my story. When writing I can often stop and change what I have written, to portray it in a different (often better) light. When answering questions out loud I tend not to overthink and answer more spontaneously. Also, I found that the interviewer encouraged me to think further around the questions, probing me on specific points, and when I transcribed the interview I was quite surprised at some of my responses, thoughts and events which had not occurred to me prior to being interviewed. I would recommend participatory interviews to be considered for autoethnographical research.

6.7 Recommendations for professional practice and policy

Decasualisation should be implemented in all FECs prior to any legal requirement. This would help the FECs (see 6.2.1) to maintain a stable lecturing workforce and also alleviate the challenges casualisation brings to the working lives and relationships of FE management and lecturers. There should be mandatory reporting on casual pay rates, and as GFECs have now been reincorporated there should be mandatory pay scales for all FE providers similar to SFC and schoolteacher pay policy. Equally, FE lecturer pay needs to be commensurate with either schoolteacher, or HE pay scales, and casual lecturers should be paid on the same scales as their permanent colleagues. The funding of FE needs to be stable to help to remove the need for casualisation, and there should be national standard pay and conditions, particularly as FE is now under public control.

Additional mandatory training for managers in how to manage casual or low hours staff is recommended to aid negation of some of the difficulties faced by the managers (see 6.3) and the casual lecturers (6.4). This could help effect a cultural change by training managers and other academic staff to view the contribution made by casual lecturers as essential. For the future (dependent upon how the new non-zero-hours policy of the government may be implemented) managing part-time variable-hours FTE lecturers could also be written into mandatory training and induction. In addition, the contractual requirements of the casual lecturer should be clarified during manager training to negate the expectations of unpaid teaching, training or administration by the lecturer. Equally, these

requirements should be carefully explained to the casual lecturer to ensure they also understand the requirements of their work.

A furtherance of a research culture within FE should be encouraged, with discussions for the potential allocation of contractual time, similar to scholarly days in HE, for FE staff to undertake research, and a programme of training for FE staff in research techniques. This should also encompass FE casual staff. This would enable a better understanding of FE, the needs of FE managers, teachers and students, and the identification of trends and challenging of FE practises (Elliott, 2017). It could also potentially raise the profile of FE within the education sector, society and government by adding to and extending the reach of FE research.

6.8 Recommendations for further research

A study of the FEC which implemented the decasualisation policy, and identification of other FECs where this policy has been introduced could be undertaken. This would enable identification of the best way to implement decasualisation and to ascertain the extent to which this has improved the working lives and relationships of management and lecturers. This research utilised the testimony from the managerial implementors of the decasualisation policy: independent research of previous casual lecturers who have been involved in the implementation could ascertain if the lecturers felt as if they had a permanent role, or if the part-time permanent element to the contract was too small to give them comfort.

A second area for future research, following the government decasualisation strategy, would be to ascertain how many lecturers choose to remain casual, and how many contracts have been deemed to be within the exclusions detailed in the Act (see 6.2.2) Linked to this could be a deeper investigation into a greater number of managers to investigate whether the implementation of the new employment laws negates the personal conflicts faced by managers and the additional workload casualisation causes for their permanent lecturers. However, the new employment laws will not be implemented quickly. With 21% (DfE, 2024) of the FE lecturer workforce employed casually, and the paucity of research surrounding casualisation of FE lecturer employment a larger and wider sample of FE lecturers and managers could be conducted. This would further investigate the effects FE casualisation has upon FE recruitment and retention, workforce satisfaction, and student learning and achievement. Actual rates of casual lecturer pay, and the perceived future financial difficulties associated with low pension contributions could also

be gathered. The research could encompass the experiences of managing casual lecturers to ascertain if the views expressed within this study are common. Added to this the views of permanent lecturers working alongside the casual lecturers could be recorded, and how they viewed work allocation. The research could also gather the participants' views of how Government and the wider society perceive the status of FE. Included within this future research could be an analysis and comparison of experiences of casualisation by gender, years of service, and vocational subject which was not possible within this thesis due to the expressed fearfulness of identification by some participants (see 5.8). Inclusion of this data would add useful context to the research and findings. Future participants would be made aware of the use of this data prior to recruitment to enable them to make an informed decision on participation. The intention to use this data would be included in the ethics approval form and participant information sheet and consent form, and reiterated in the interview.

At a presentation (Newman, 2024) on my findings I was asked why the lecturers stayed within FE when the conditions were so poor. It took a while to find an answer; however, I replied it was because they loved the job and felt a responsibility to their students, and their discipline. Building on this could be further investigations of professional love within FE, and the desire of the lecturers and managers to remain in an educational sector, even when on casual contracts, or on lower pay than they might receive in other education sectors or in industry.

Splitting the Progressive groupings into generic groups, particularly a grouping of educators to amend the precariat theory and to ascertain if it is a "dangerous class" (Standing, 2021) would also be an area for further research. Also, the positioning of FE managers in the precariat was not reviewed and could be an avenue for future research, particularly in light of the lower FE manager pay in comparison with schools and HE (see 2.4).

6.9 Professional learning and research journey

6.9.1 Personal employment journey

When I first started my Doctorate in Education, I had left FE to work part-time in the Civil Service having been unable to secure a permanent position as an FEC lecturer over a period of almost three years, working for four different FE providers and two agencies. Again, as had happened so often during my career, FE and lecturing drew me back in – simply put, I

missed it - so in November 2019 I returned to FE, on zero-hours contracts, but this time only working for two providers.

On my return to FE in the first COVID-19 lockdown I stopped being paid, causing serious financial difficulties and stress. Even after the lockdown finished my lecturing hours were severely curtailed. Finally, I secured a permanent contract at the end of 2020 with one of the FE providers and my reactions to this episode entirely refocussed my attention upon researching the effects of and perceptions of casualisation, particularly upon managers employing casual lecturing staff (see 1.2).

At the end of 2021 an opportunity to move into HE arose, as a part-time hourly-paid lecturer, at the university where I was undertaking my doctorate. Without already studying for the doctorate I would not have had this opportunity. Having given much thought to once more becoming a casual lecturer and giving up a permanent FE lecturing position I decided to bite the bullet, accept the risk, and make the move. I would like to say that this move was solely for my research, to allow myself to create distance from the FE arena in which I was now investigating a contentious issue and move me to a position of insider/outsider, increasing my personal parrhesia (Foucault, 2001; 2019) by affording me the ability to comment upon FE casual contracts without fear of repercussion. However, I have to admit that although this was the happy consequence of the move, it was not the sole reason. Moving to HE was mostly to do with the infinitely better pay that I could achieve for fewer lecturing hours and working days, whilst still doing a job I loved. A part-time permanent position arose in the department in which I was working, and being a doctoral candidate afforded me the advantage over other applicants, and I succeeded in achieving the post. The long interview (Gleeson, Davies and Wheeler, 2005) had prevailed again.

As an example of the precarious nature of casualisation, my personal story of employment over the five and a half years I have been researching for my doctorate is not uncommon in today's work environment (see 2.1), and particularly in FE and HE (see 2.6). I have had seven different employment contracts, worked for five different departments teaching at least eight different subjects over a plethora of qualifications, for four different organisations. Finally, thank you doctorate for enabling me to secure a permanent contract in HE, for as long as it may last.

6.9.2 Personal learning journey

Coming from an English degree background, followed by an MSc in IT I had not studied social sciences and had not heard the words, “Foucault”, “ontology” or “epistemology”. My learning curve throughout this journey has been steep, at times seemingly impossibly steep and unachievable, but during a train ride with another EdD student to present at the BERA conference (Newman, 2023a) we both realised that we were using terms such as “autoethnography” and “narrative research” with mutual understanding – a light bulb moment.

Over the past four years I have presented my research at many conferences and to other post-graduates (Newman, 2022a; 2022b; 2022c; 2022d; 2023a; 2023b; 2023c; 2024), and this has improved my academic presentation confidence, and my ability to answer probing questions considerably. As a lecturer/teacher I was unused to being the person questioned about their own thoughts and research, and this was something I have had to learn. As a researcher I suddenly became someone who had to defend my work, consider criticism of my own ideas, change what I was doing, alter my perceptions, reflect upon what I was writing and why I was writing it. This was both challenging and enjoyable, challenging in accepting that I was not always right, enjoyable in stretching my mind and intellect to levels I did not know existed in my brain.

I can bring these experiences to my HE students, helping them to understand the complexities and challenges of what they need to do, as they know that I am going through academic rigour too. Merely being able to show them different ways of finding different articles, how to use the referencing software - discussing its merits and irritating drawbacks helps them and hopefully speeds up their research as well. It has been a wonderful and sometimes terribly challenging experience (for my family as well as for myself) which has needed every ounce of resilience that I have – but I have thoroughly enjoyed it and, it has changed me, and my life.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Definitions of casual contracts used in the research

Zero-hours contracts

Zero-hours contracts is a ubiquitous term used when describing an employment contract where there are not set contracted hours of working between the employer and the employee or worker. The contracts can be fixed-term, open ended (no end date) or permanent (stated within the contract).

Fixed-term and temporary contracts

Fixed-term and temporary contracts are those which have a specified end date which is set in advance and will finish when a specific task or event has been completed (UK Government, 2022a). The employee has the same rights as a permanent employee (CIPD, 2015).

Permanent variable-hours with minimum guaranteed hours

FTE means full-time equivalent, that is, the contract attracts the same benefits such as holidays and full year working as a permanent employee. These contracts are similar to zero-hour contracts but there is a guarantee that a minimum number of hours will be given to the lecturer (UCU, 2020). The hours can be increased, then decreased as the need arises.

Permanent variable-hours (term-time-only)/non-permanent variable-hours

In FE this is a contract which is generally used for term-time-only working (UK Government, 2022b). Often staff will be paid monthly with all the work being undertaken within term-time. They are also used to increase, or decrease allocated working hours as and when needed.

Agency/Supply

Usually a zero-hours contract. The employee's employment contract is with the Agency who is responsible for all employment rights. There is no direct contractual relationship between the employee and the organisation in which they are working for. On day one of work the agency worker has the right to be told of relevant vacancies within the organisation in which they are working, and after completing twelve weeks the agency worker will have the right to the same terms as an employee who has been appointed directly by the organisation (UK Government, 2022a).

Appendix 2. FE Provider type and FE qualification acronyms

Acronym	FE provider type
FEC	Further education College (incorporating all publicly funded FE providers)
GFEC	General Further Education College (technical, vocational, tertiary colleges)
SFC	Sixth form college
PSPF	Private sector public funded (including Independent training providers
OPFP	Other public funded provider (includes some HE providers, some Local Authority (LA) providers and some University technical colleges (UTCs), specialist colleges and 16-19 free schools.
Entry level	Below GCSE level qualification ranging from Entry 1 – Entry 3
Level 2	equivalent to GCSE level qualifications
Level 3	equivalent to A level qualifications
T-Level	Technical Level qualification – a vocational qualification designed to be equivalent to A level qualifications

The acronyms are taken from the FEWDC 2022/2023 (DfE, 2024)

The qualification definitions are taken from the UK Government website (Gov.uk, 2024)

Appendix 3. Methods used to identify the literature reviewed in the thesis

Types of literature and sources

Type of literature	Sources
Government publications Acts of parliament Command papers	UK Government and Government Departments Hansard House of Commons Library
Research reports	Research bodies e.g. IFS, NFER, BERA Government published reports
Journal articles (dependent upon subject) ***Search criteria***: English Available online, or if unavailable requested through document delivery (British Library, then University of Staffordshire Library) Where relevant, preferably recent articles (after 2019) **Books**	Variety of journals including: Education research journals Social science Research methods – qualitative, autoethnography, narrative research Management and HR

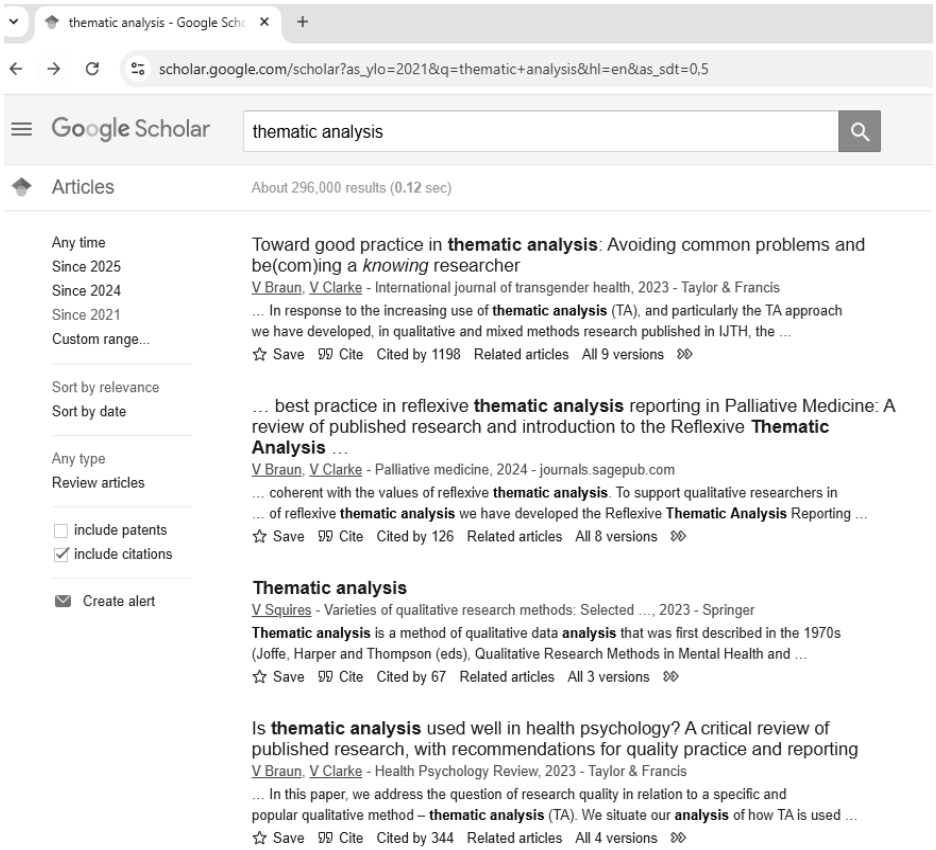
How articles/books were found

University of Staffordshire library search (Advanced search) and Google scholar were the search engines generally utilised. The literature searches used were based around the words or events being researched which were typed into google scholar. An example of search terms for casualised lecturer employment in FE and HE were “lecturer” and “precarity” or “precarious” or “short-term” or “casual” or “fixed-term”.

The literature shown from the searches was then reviewed, and read if access was available, or unavailable articles/books of interest were requested - articles initially via British Library Docdel then, following the British Library Cyber-attack, using Staffordshire University document delivery service.

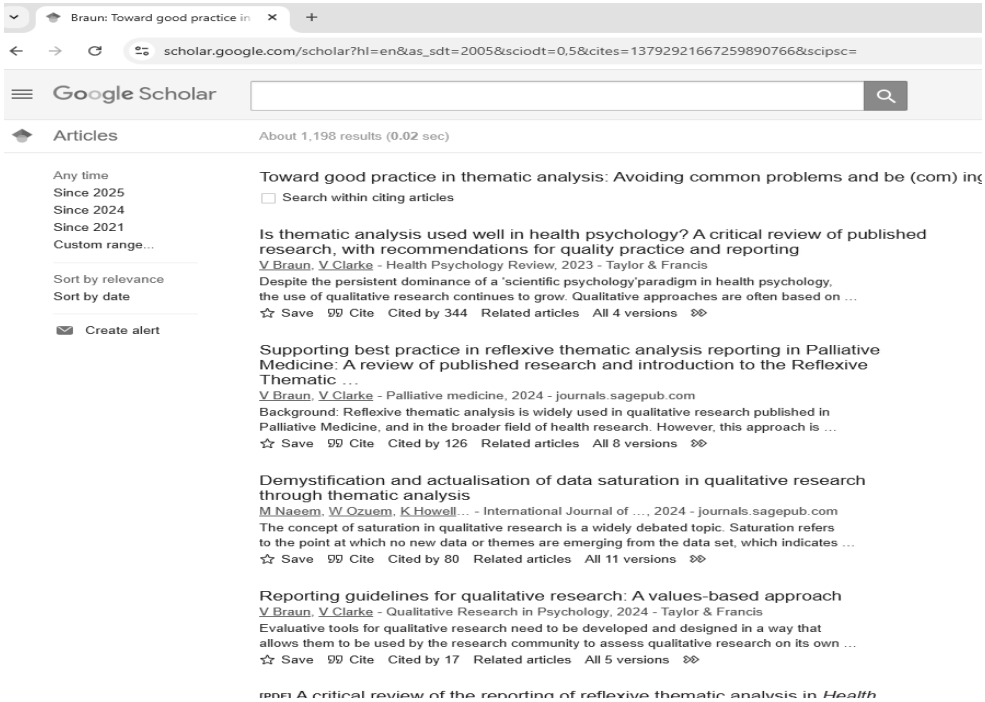
Frequently the references within the article were then read for efficacy and those articles of interest were requested and read, and, circularly, references of interest within the articles/books were then requested and read.

The example below shows the search for thematic analysis, with a date range of “Since 2021” selected.



Also, the “Cited by” would be used to search for relevant literature

This example shows the search using Cited by for the above



Appendix 4. Pilot interview schedule

Interview schedule - H Newman 15023914 EDUC70474

Project Reference Number:

Project Title: A manager's experience of employing staff on casualised contracts

Selected sample

A manager with over 10 years' experience of employing staff on casual and permanent contracts within the public sector.

Before the interview

Following Ethics approval

Contact the participant and email the information sheet and consent form (to be electronically signed)

Once consent form signed and received.

2 weeks before the interview

Contact the participant and arrange for Teams meeting - date, time and place.

Ask the manager will be asked to provide a brief resume (either on paper or by email) of their management experience, including how many years' relevant experience they have of employing staff on casualised contracts.

Permission will be sort to keep the paper or electronic version of this – in line with the University's data requirements.

2 days before the interview

Contact participant to confirm date, time and place

The interview

Start of the interview

Recording the interview

Ask the participant's permission to begin to audio and voice to text record the interview

Discuss that notes will also be taken.

Recording will start after permission is granted.

Consent form and information sheet

Check that the participant understands that they do not have to participate in the interview and clarify any questions occurring from the information sheet.

State that data gathered will be anonymised and will be kept confidential in line with the University's policies.

State that if they wish to withdraw they are free to at any time without stating a reason.

State that after 01/05/2021 the withdrawal of their data will no longer be possible as it will have been processed and anonymised and included as part of an assessed module.

Detail the **purpose of the stu**dy as being to discover how the participant views the use of casualised employment contracts (including zero hour, fixed-term, proportional and temporary contracts) for employing their staff.

This data will help to further the discussion around the use of casualised contract for employing staff.

State that they have been asked to participate because they are a manager with experience of the use of casualised contracts within the public sector.

State that they will be asked to attend a follow up interview where their views on the interview process and questions will be recorded, and where they will check the transcript for accuracy. Inform them that this will aid future interviews.

Detail the interview process

I will ask a series of questions and you will be invited to respond. The interview will last for approximately 1 hour.

During the interview I will use the term "casualised contracts" by this I mean temporary, agency, fixed-term, 0 hours or any other non-permanent contract. Please feel free to use the terms for these contracts that you are used to.

(in the interview cater the questions to the terms used by the participant)

Interview questions (these will be individualised on receipt of the resume) During the interview other questions may arise to prompt the participant to detail further experiences.

(refer to resume)

- I see that you have x years of experience of X. Would you like to tell me a little about your experiences within this work area?

- During your time as a manager within X could you tell me about your experiences of employing staff on casualised contracts.
- Can you tell me about experiences where these contracts *(used the participant's terminology)* have been beneficial to your business?
- Can you detail any experiences you may have when you considered that employing staff on *casual contracts* was not beneficial to the business?
- What do you consider to be the benefits for staff employed on casual contracts?
- What do you consider to be the drawbacks for staff employed on casual contracts?
- What is your overall view of using casualised contracts?
- Is there anything more you would like to add to what you have already said?

After the interview

Ask the participant to reflect on the interview and give feedback

Discuss the process for transcription (which will be emailed to the interviewee prior to the follow up). The interviewee will provide comments via email.

Interview schedule - H Newman

Project Reference Number: SU_22_257

Project Title: An investigation of the rise of the casualisation of employment in further education settings in England: A narrative study of academic managers' and lecturers' perspectives and experiences.

The Interview process

(a biographical questionnaire was sent to the participant prior to the interview)

I will ask a series of questions and you will be invited to respond. The interview will last for approximately 1 hour.

During the interview I will use the term "casualised contracts" by this I mean temporary, agency, fixed-term, 0 hours or any other non-permanent contract. Please feel free to use the terms for these contracts that you are used to.

(in the interview cater the questions to the terms used by the participant)

Interview questions (these will be individualised during the interview to reflect the answers from the biographical questionnaire) During the interview other questions may arise to prompt the participant to detail further experiences.

Employee (Lecturer) questions

1) Thank you for the questionnaire you sent back to me - I see from the questionnaire that you returned to me that you have x amount of experience of working on casual *(use their terminology)* contracts – could you detail your experiences of these contracts?

Prompt – how did you feel about the contracts?

Prompt – do you feel a full member of the team?

Prompt – can you talk freely in meetings and are your views listened to?

2) Why do you think the College, Department uses casual contracts?

What difference, if any, would it make to you if you were in a permanent contract?

3) When has being on a casual contract been beneficial to you?

Prompt: Could you provide examples

4) What benefits do you think the college has with you being on a casual contract?

Prompt: Could you provide examples

When has being on a casual contract not been beneficial to you?

Prompt: Could you provide examples

5) When has it not been beneficial to the College having casual employees?

6) Can you talk about how being on a casual contract impacts your working life, and your personal life?

7) How do you feel about being on a casual contract?

8) Could you talk about your working relationship with your manager(s) and the college in light of your casual contract.

Prompt: If power relationships are mentioned ask them to explain in more depth and provide examples.

9) What is your overall view of casual contracts?

Thank you. Is there anything else you wish to add which you have not had the opportunity to talk about but which you feel might be useful for this research?

Academic Manager questions

1)I see from the questionnaire that you returned to me that you have employed x amount of people over x amount of years on casual *(use their terminology*) contracts – could you detail your experiences of these contracts?

Prompt – how did you feel about the contracts?

Prompt – do you feel that the casual employees are full members of the team?

How do you help this?

Prompt – do the casual employees contribute to work discussions in the same way as permanent employees?

2) What are the reasons for the College, and your Department, to use casual contracts?

3) What differences, if any, do you feel it would make to your Department if you had permanent lecturers rather than ones on casual contracts?

4) What other benefits do you think having casual employees is to the College as a whole?

5) Can you detail any experiences you may have when you considered that employing lecturers on casual contracts was not beneficial your department?

Prompt: Could you provide examples

6) Are there instances where you feel that employing casual lecturers were not beneficial to the College?

Prompt: Could you provide examples

7) Could you talk about your working relationship with your lecturer(s) in light of your casual contract.

Prompt: If power relationships are mentioned ask them to explain in more depth and provide examples.

8) How do you think being on a casual contract impacts the lecturers' working and personal lives?

9) What is your overall view of using casualised contracts?

Prompt: Do you feel that the flexibility they offer is important to the College?

Prompt: Do you see a time when they may not be used?

Prompt: Do you prefer to employ lecturers on casual contracts?

Thank you. Is there anything else you wish to add which you have not had the opportunity to talk about but which you feel might be useful for this research?

After the interview

Discuss the process for transcription Inform the participant that the transcript of the interview will be sent to them to check by email.

Thank the participant for their time and how their contribution will help to inform the important discussions around the use of casualised contracts in further education.

Appendix 6. Biographical questionnaires

Project Reference Number: SU_22_257

Biographical questionnaire 1 -Academic Managers

Your career in further education and your experience of casualised contracts

Private and Confidential

Project Title: An investigation of the rise of the casualisation of employment in further education settings in England: A narrative study of academic managers' and lecturers' perspectives and experiences.

Casual contracts = Proportional hourly-paid, zero- hours, agency, supply, fixed-term, temporary

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the interviews for my research.

I would be grateful if you would answer the questions below on your career and experience of casual contracts prior to the interview. If you do not wish to answer any questions please leave them blank.

1	How long have you worked in the further education Sector?
2	Which types of colleges have you worked in? For example, Sixth Form College/FE College
3	Which departments have you worked in/managed, and which department/school/directorate do you manage now?
4	What type of courses and students are taught in your Department/School/Directorate • Which vocational area(s)? • Which level (2/3/ HE)? • What age range? • Day or evening classes
5	How many lecturers have you employed on casual contracts, and when?

6	Do you have lecturers working in your Department who are currently on casual contracts? If yes, how many, and what proportion of your lecturing staff are on casual contracts? Which subjects do these lecturers teach?
7	Have you been employed on casual contracts? (please state any casual contract work whether in FE or in other industries)
8a	If you have worked outside further education could you detail for which (type of) industry or school
8b	Were you or any of your staff/any staff you worked with outside of FE on a casual contract?

Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire. Please return the questionnaire to me via email at helen.newman@research.staffs.ac.uk.

Project Reference Number: SU_22_257

Biographical questionnaire 2 -Lecturers

Your career in further education and your experience of casualised contracts

Private and Confidential

Project Title: An investigation of the rise of the casualisation of employment in further education settings in England: A narrative study of academic managers' and lecturers' perspectives and experiences.

Casual contracts = Proportional hourly-paid, zero hours, agency, supply, fixed-term, temporary

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the interviews for my research.

I would be grateful if you would answer the questions below on your career and experience of casual contracts prior to the interview.

1	How long have you worked in the further education Sector?
2	Which types of colleges have you worked in? For example, Sixth Form College/FE College.
3	Which departments have you worked in?

4	What do you teach, and which level and age groups do you teach?
5	When have you been employed on casual contracts? Are you still employed on a casual contract? (please state any casual contract work whether in FE or in other industries)
6	Have you been employed on a permanent contract in further education?
7	Have you been employed on permanent contracts outside of further education?

Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire. Please return the questionnaire to me via email at helen.newman@research.staffs.ac.uk.

Appendix 7. Final information sheet

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Project Reference Number: SU_22_257

Researcher: Helen Newman

Title of study

An investigation of the rise of the casualisation of employment in further education settings in England: A narrative study of academic managers' and lecturers' perspectives and experiences.

Invitation Paragraph

I would like to invite you to participate in a study which forms part of my Doctoral research. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

The purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to discover how further education academic managers and lecturers view the use of casualised employment contracts (including zero hour, fixed-term, proportional and temporary contracts) for staff. The findings of the study will promote further discussions around the use of casualised contracts within the workplace.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited you to take part in this study because you are a current or former manager or lecturer with experience of the use of casualised contracts within the further education sector.

What will happen if I take part?

Taking part would involve you agreeing to fill in a questionnaire about your work background and to participate in a face-to-face interview with myself. The questionnaire will be sent to you by email a month before your interview and you will be asked to return the completed questionnaire a week before the interview date, by email. In the interview I will ask a series of questions and you will be invited to respond. The interview will be audio-recorded and voice to text recording will also be used. I will also take notes during the interview. This discussion will be transcribed later. The interview will take place at a mutually agreed time and private location. It is anticipated that this will take approximately 1 hour.

Do I have to take part?

Participation is completely voluntary. You should only take part if you want to and choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in anyway. Once you have read the information sheet, please contact me if you have any questions that will help you make a decision about taking part. If you decide to take part I will ask you to sign a consent form and you will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Incentives

There are no incentives for taking part in this research project.

What are the possible risks of taking part?

Participating in the research will not cause any personal risks or disadvantages, as your identity will be protected. Your identity and your employment will remain confidential. None of the information you provide will be linked to you in the final report, or any published academic writing such as in conference papers and journals. Pseudonyms will be used in order to ensure anonymity and all data such as transcripts of the interviews will be kept securely and will be destroyed after ten years in accordance with the University procedures.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There are no remunerations and personal benefits for the participants in this study. However, you will be contributing to an important study. The knowledge gained will be shared with the academic and wider community to aid understanding of the use of casualised contracts with further educational Settings.

Data handling and confidentiality

Your data will be processed in accordance with the data protection law and will comply with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR).

Data Protection Statement

The data controller for this project will be Staffordshire University. The University will process your personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above. The legal basis for processing your personal data for research purposes under the data protection law is a 'task in the public interest' You can provide your consent for the use of your personal data in this study by completing the consent form that has been provided to you.

You have the right to access information held about you. Your right of access can be exercised in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation. You also have other rights including rights of correction, erasure, objection, and data portability. Questions, comments and requests about your personal data can also be sent to the Staffordshire University Data Protection Officer. If you wish to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office, please visit http://ico.org.uk.

What if I change my mind about taking part?

You are free withdraw at any point of the study, without having to give a reason. Withdrawing from the study will not affect you in any way. You are able to withdraw your data from the study up until the point of data analysis (up to three weeks after the date of the interview) after which withdrawal of your data will no longer be possible as the data would have been processed and anonymised and included in my thesis for the Professional Doctorate in Education.

If you choose to withdraw from the study we will not retain any information that you have provided us as a part of this study.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The findings will be included in the final thesis which will be submitted in consideration of Staffordshire University Professional Doctorate in Education. I also intend to disseminate the findings by publishing research papers in peer reviewed academic journals and/or books. The findings could also be presented in academic forums such as conferences, seminars, workshops or could be used for teaching purposes at the University. All data will be presented anonymously.

Who should I contact for further information?

If you have any questions or require more information about this study, please contact me using the following contact details: helen.newman@research.staffs.ac.uk

What if I have further questions, or if something goes wrong?

This research is being undertaken for the purpose of completing a Professional Doctorate in Education at Staffordshire University. If you have any concerns about this research, please feel free to contact my Supervisor, Prof. Gillian Forrester. Her email address is gillian.forrester@staffs.ac.uk

If this study has harmed you in any way or if you wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the study you can contact the module tutor or the Chair of the Staffordshire University Ethics Committee for further advice and information:

Email: Tim.Horne@staffs.ac.uk

Work: 01782 295722

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering taking part in this research

Appendix 8. Consent form

Project Reference Number: SU_22_257

RESEARCH PROJECT CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: An investigation of the rise of the casualisation of employment in Further Education settings in England: A narrative study of academic managers' and lecturers' perspectives and experiences.

Researcher: Helen Newman

I have read and understood the information sheet.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions, and I have had any questions answered satisfactorily.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time without having to give an explanation.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that the interview will be audio-recorded/video recorded	Yes ☐	No ☐
I consent that data collected could be used for submission in the form of an assignment for an Education Doctorate, for publication in academic journals or could be presented in academic forums (conferences, seminars, workshops) or can be used for teaching purposes and understand that all data will be presented anonymously.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I agree that data will only be used for this project although the data may also be audited for quality control purposes	Yes ☐	No ☐
All data will be sorted safely on a password protected computer (electronic data), or locked away securely (hard copies of data) for 10 years before being destroyed	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that I can withdraw my data from the project up to 30th March 2023 without having to give an explanation	Yes ☐	No ☐
I hereby give consent to take part in this study	Yes ☐	No ☐

Name Participant (print)	Date	Signature
Helen Newman	03/10/2022	Helen Newman

Name Researcher (print)	Date	Signature

Appendix 9. Generic email to recruit lecturer participants

Dear all

My name is Helen Newman and I am currently studying for the Doctorate in Education at Staffordshire University.

I am looking for candidates to participate in my research into how lecturers view the use of casual and temporary contracts in further education. The participants I am looking for are lecturers (not managers) who have been recently, or are currently employed in the further education Sector on casual/temporary contracts – these include zero hours, temporary, agency, fixed-term etc.

Taking part would involve you agreeing to fill in a questionnaire about your work background and to participate in a one hour face-to-face interview with myself. Participating in the research will not cause any personal risks or disadvantages, as your identity will be protected. Your identity and your employment will remain confidential. None of the information you provide will be linked to you in the final report, or any published academic writing such as in conference papers and journals.

The findings of the study will promote further discussions around the use of casualised contracts within post 16 education.

If you are interested could you please contact me at helen.newman@research.staffs.ac.uk.

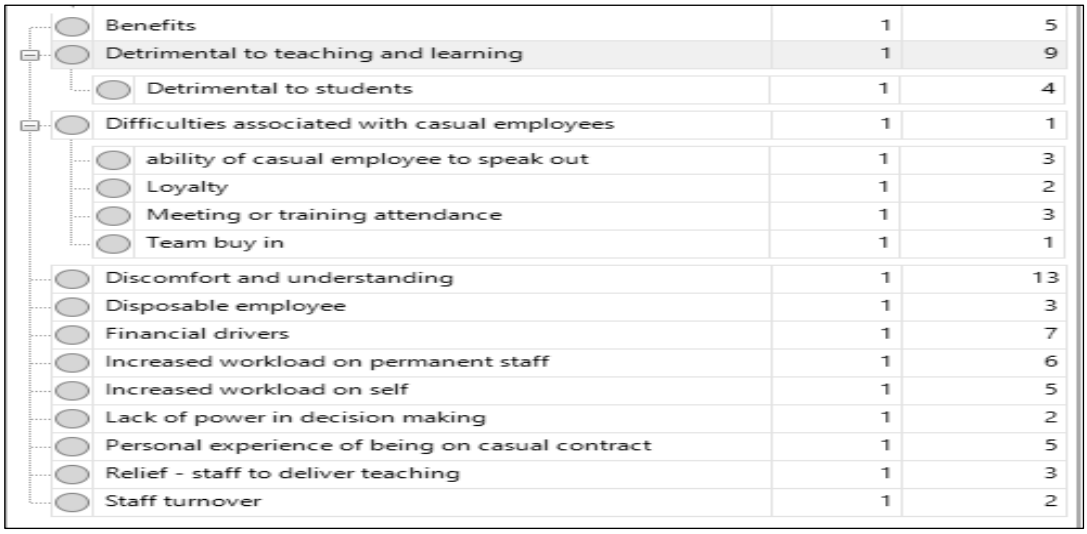
Thank you

Helen Newman

Appendix 10. Example of initial data analysis and theme development

A project named "Manager Interviews" was created in NVivo and the manager interview transcriptions were uploaded. All the transcriptions were re-read, appropriate themes were developed and coded into NVivo, and extracts of the data were mapped against the themes. After the initial analysis of the manager transcriptions a new project named "Lecturer interviews" was created and the themes were copied into it from the "Manager interviews" project. The following describes how the themes were developed and refined throughout the analysis of each transcription. The data were closely read and additional themes were identified and coded into NVivo.

MPA's data were analysed first. After the initial analysis of MPA's responses twelve overarching themes were coded - with sub-themes.



Benefits	1	5
Detrimental to teaching and learning	1	9
Detrimental to students	1	4
Difficulties associated with casual employees	1	1
ability of casual employee to speak out	1	3
Loyalty	1	2
Meeting or training attendance	1	3
Team buy in	1	1
Discomfort and understanding	1	13
Disposable employee	1	3
Financial drivers	1	7
Increased workload on permanent staff	1	6
Increased workload on self	1	5
Lack of power in decision making	1	2
Personal experience of being on casual contract	1	5
Relief - staff to deliver teaching	1	3
Staff turnover	1	2

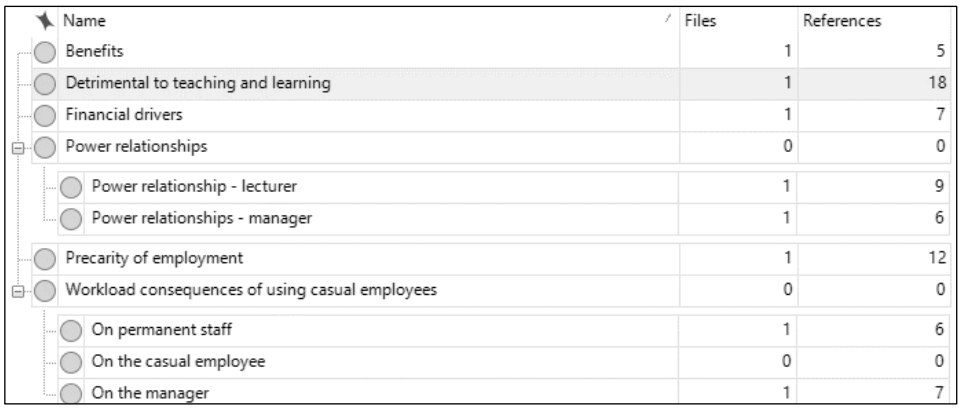
The themes were reviewed prior to the analysis of MPB's transcript to lessen the number of themes. The following themes were merged as they were deemed to either contain analogous data which was often repeated within the themes, or new themes were created to organise the data more logically.

Original theme	**New theme/sub theme**	**Reason**
Detrimental to students merged into	Detrimental to teaching and learning	Analogous data
Lack of power in decision-making was changed into a main theme with two sub-themes	Power relationships • Power relationships – lecturer	This allowed differentiation between the perceived power relationships by the manager between themselves, the hierarchy and the lecturers, and how they perceived the lecturers'

Original theme	New theme/sub theme	Reason
	• Power relationships – manager	view of power in the relationship with the College and Manager.
Difficulties associated with casual employees • Ability of casual employees to speak out Merged into	Power relationships • Power relationships – lecturer	The content within this theme was considered to be associated with power relationships.
Difficulties associated with casual employees • Loyalty • Meeting or training attendance • Team buy in Deleted		Limited data within the Parent theme and the sub-themes. Data already present in other themes.
Disposable Employee Change to	Precarity of employment As a more appropriate theme.	Although there were only 3 data in this theme it was considered that this would be a prevalent theme both for the manager and lecturer data, and that on review more data would be put within this theme.
Increased workload on staff Increased workload on self Changed to	Workload consequences of using casual staff • On permanent staff • On the manager • On the casual employee	This was changed to better describe the content of the themes, and also to add the workload consequences on the casual employee – review of data will add to this sub-theme.
Relief – staff to deliver teaching Deleted		Limited data in theme – repeated in other themes.

Original theme	New theme/sub theme	Reason
Discomfort and understanding Deleted		Although this theme had 14 data the data was repeated severally in other themes.
Staff turnover Deleted		Limited data in the theme, repeated elsewhere.

Following the review and modification of the themes there were six themes specified, two with sub-themes.



Name	Files	References
Benefits	1	5
Detrimental to teaching and learning	1	18
Financial drivers	1	7
Power relationships	0	0
Power relationship - lecturer	1	9
Power relationships - manager	1	6
Precarity of employment	1	12
Workload consequences of using casual employees	0	0
On permanent staff	1	6
On the casual employee	0	0
On the manager	1	7

MPB's responses were then analysed. During this analysis the following themes were added or changed.

Original theme	New theme/sub-theme	Reason
n/a	Team integration	To capture the perceptions of the manager on how casual employees integrated into the department, including meeting attendance, marking, administration etc.
	Contract Types and reasons used	To capture the multiple differing contracts and reasons for their uses within the FE Colleges.
Benefits	Benefits to the College	Was changed to differentiate between benefits to the casual employee and benefits to the College.
	Precarity of employment	sub-theme added to record the manager's perceptions of the reasons

	• Perceived reasons for remaining	that casual employees do not achieve a permanent employment
Detrimental to teaching and learning	Detrimental to teaching and learning • Problems with casual employees	sub-theme added to record examples of problems with casual employees

MPD was interviewed at the same time as MPC. Their responses were separated into two files for analysis.

Only one change was made to the themes from this analysis – **Benefits** was re-added **with Benefits to the College** moved to a sub-theme, and a new sub-theme of Benefits to the Employee was added. This was to capture the manager's views of how a casual contract could be beneficial to the employee.

No changes were made to the themes from MPD's or MPE's analysis

Name	Files	References
Benefits	0	0
Benefits to the College	5	24
Benefits to the Employee	3	9
Contract Types and reasons used	3	20
Detrimental to teaching and learning	5	25
Problems with casual employees	4	26
Financial drivers	2	11
Power relationships	0	0
Power relationship - lecturer	4	31
Power relationships - manager	5	18
Precarity of employment	5	38
Perceived reasons for remaining casual	3	5
Team integration	4	16
Workload consequences of using casual employees	0	0
On permanent staff	4	16
On the casual employee	3	11
On the manager	5	12

Appendix 11. Initial theme mapping to Idiom themes

Manager Interviews Project		**Idiom Manager Interviews Project**
Themes mapped across to		
Benefits	Contract Types and reasons used	A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush
Precarity of employment	Workload consequences of using casual employees	Rapid appointment of casual staff usage
Precarity of employment	Workload consequences of using casual employees	**Revolving door of staff**
Workload consequences of using casual employees	Detrimental to teaching and learning	**A team is only as strong as its weakest link**
On permanent staff	Problems with casual employees	Department and curriculum consequences
On the manager		Managerial consequences
Detrimental to teaching and learning	Team integration	Student educational consequences
Financial drivers	Benefits	**Balance the books**
Benefits to the College		Casual labour is inexpensive
Financial drivers		FE funding
Problems with casual employees		Negative financial implications for the college
Benefits to the College		**Dangling the carrot**
Precarity of employment		**Don't rock the boat**
Workload consequences of using casual employees	Power relationships	**Fight going on in your head**
On the casual employee	Power relationship – lecturer	Casual lecturer professional conflict
On the manager	Power relationships - manager	Manager professional conflict
Precarity of employment	Power relationships - manager/lecturer	**I know what it's like**

Precarity of employment		**Living on a knife edge**
Precarity of employment	Team integration	Casual contract financial instability
Precarity of employment	Team integration	Casual contract job insecurity
Financial drivers	Workload consequences of using casual employees	**Stuck between a rock and a hard place**
Financial drivers		Financial implications
Benefits to the College		Manipulation of casual lecturers
Perceived reasons for remaining casual		Necessity to use casual staff
Team integration	Power relationships - lecturer	**The penny drops**
Power relationships - manager/lecturer		**The power is in their hands**
Detrimental to teaching and learning		**Wheels will come off**
Problems with casual employees		

Appendix 12. Final idiom themes

Theme and sub-category names	Interviews	Quotes
1. Balance the books	0	0
Casual labour is inexpensive	3	11
FE funding	2	9
Negative financial implications for the college	4	8
2. Any port in a storm	0	0
3. I know what it's like	5	15
4. Chains and weak links	0	0
Department and curriculum consequences	5	24
Managerial consequences	5	38
Quality concerns about casual lecturers	4	16
Recruitment and retention difficulties	3	4
Student educational consequences	5	17
5. The power is in their hands	0	0
Casual lecturer power	5	24
Manager power	3	14
6. Living on a knife edge	0	0
Casual contract financial instability	4	19
Casual contract job insecurity	4	21
Multiple employments and or multiple courses	2	3
Resentment of casual situation	1	1
7. Try before you buy	5	33
Lecturer proving themselves	5	19
Manager testing the water	3	9
Uncertainty over course viability	4	5
8. Carrots and stick	0	0
Dangling the carrot	3	9
Using the stick	1	1
9. Goose and golden eggs	0	0
Casual industry experienced lecturers	2	4
Current part-time or casual lecturers offered more hours first	3	4
Moving away from casualisation	5	25

Appendix 13. Policy themes – in depth

Policy superordinate theme	
Idiom theme and sub-categories	**Idiom meaning and application**
Any port in a storm	**Idiom meaning -** In a tricky situation help is taken from wherever it can be sourced. **Idiom application -** The desperate need to staff courses when staff shortages occur.
Rapid appointment of casual lecturers	Rapid appointment of casual lecturing staff when shortfalls occur in course delivery.
Relief to have lecturing staff	Feeling of relief when casual lecturers are appointed to vacant roles, particularly when there are staffing challenges.
Balance the books	**Idiom meaning -** To ensure that income does not exceed expenditure. **Idiom application -** Financial considerations in FE settings leading to casualisation.
Casual labour is inexpensive	Lower expense costs to the FE organisation in light of the employment of casual staff: Paying lecturers term-time-only, solely for hours worked or for course duration, easily disposable therefore no redundancy. In terms of agency staff the HR, employee related costs covered by the Agency.
FE funding	Government policies driving FE colleges to save money by the use of casualisation of lecturing staff.
Negative financial implications for the college	The negative implications that the utilisation of casual lecturers can financially cause to the FE colleges.
Try before you buy	**Idiom meaning -** To test something out before committing. **Idiom application -** The casual lecturer testing or being tested before committing to or being offered a contract in an FE setting, and the use of casual lecturing on new, additional or temporary courses.
Lecturer proving themselves	Where a casual lecturer proves themselves worthy of a permanent job to the FE setting, or where the casual lecturer tests out lecturing to ascertain if they want to enter the teaching profession or tests out the FE setting to see if they wish to work there.
Manager testing the water	Where the manager/FE college trials the casual lecturer (either intentionally, or unintentionally) as part of the permanent recruitment process.

Uncertainty over course viability	Using casual lecturers when a new courses/modules/curriculum area are being run prior to certainty over their continuation in the future.
Goose and golden eggs	**Idiom meaning -** Killing the goose that lays the golden eggs is an idiom for myopic destruction of something valuable, or the motivation of greed driving the destruction of that which creates money. **Idiom application -** The examination of how the use of casualisation can be both detrimental or beneficial to an FE organisation, and how a move towards the removal of casualisation may be seen as beneficial.
Casual industry experienced lecturers	Benefits of using casual lecturers with specialist or industrial experience.
Current part-time or casual lecturers offered more hours first	The use of known casual lecturers or current fractional lecturers when additional teaching is identified.
Moving away from casualisation	Decasualisation - The move to increase permanent, and permanent variable staff and to move away from using casual lecturing staff.

Appendix 14. Working lives themes – in depth

Working lives superordinate theme	
Idiom theme and sub-categories	**Idiom meaning and application**
Chains and weak links	**Idiom meaning -** A chain is only as strong as its weakest link, meaning that if one link fails, the whole chain will. **Idiom application -** The weak link refers to the actual or anticipated future issues associated with the use of casual lecturers, and how they integrate, in the organisation.
Department and curriculum consequences	The consequences of casual lecturer employment on Departments; potential conflicts with permanent staff over curriculum planning and work allocation.
Managerial consequences	The consequences for managers of the use of casual lecturers. These include managerial concern for casual lecturers' well-being, integration and workload allocation, and additional workload for managers.
Quality concerns about casual lecturers	Concerns over competence of casual lecturers and the consequences that this can have on the College.
Recruitment and retention difficulties	Difficulties in retaining casual lecturers, and recruitment and attrition challenges in FE settings.
Student educational consequences	The consequences of using casual lecturers on student performance and achievement.
I know what it's like	**Idiom meaning -** Empathising with someone due to familiarity with a similar situation. **Idiom application -** The managers drawing upon their own experiences of being employed on casual contracts and empathising with the casual lecturers they employ.
Living on a knife edge	**Idiom meaning -** The situation is unbalanced and uncertain. **Idiom application -** This theme explores the precarity in which the casual lecturer is perceived to be in by the manager.
Casual contract financial instability	The difficulties that the casual lecturer faces financially.
Casual contract job insecurity	The uncertainty and insecurity that the casual lecturer faces.
Multiple employments	When a casual lecturer has to work in different settings and, or teach multiple disciplines.

and or multiple courses	
Resentment of casual situation	The resentment towards the employer or permanent colleagues felt by the casual lecturer.

Appendix 15. Power relationship themes – in depth

Power relationships superordinate theme	
Idiom theme and sub-categories	**Idiom meaning and application**
Carrots and sticks	**Idiom meaning -** Using reward and punishment to control. **Idiom application –** The examination of how manipulation is used on casual lecturers – either a potential permanent contract or loss of teaching hours. Although this is encompassed in "**Try before you buy**" it explores a more cynical use of the hopes and fears of the casual lecturer.
Dangling the carrot	How if the casual lecturer works hard they may be rewarded with a permanent contract.
Using the stick	How if the casual lecturer refuses work they may not be offered teaching hours.
The power is in their hands	**Idiom meaning -** It is in your possession or control. **Idiom application -** The exploration of the power that the casual contract brings to both the manager and the lecturer.
Casual lecturer power	The power that casualisation affords to the lecturer.
Manager power	The power that casualisation affords to the lecturer.

Appendix 16. MPA narrative report

Manager Participant A

Background

Manager Participant A (MPA) had over 16 years' experience, eight years as a lecturer and eight years plus as a manager, in various GFEC and SFC settings. They had worked their way up through the management scale to become Head of Department (in more than one college). They had been employed on casual zero-hours contracts (term-time-only) at the start of their FE career, and had taught, and managed, a variety of vocational subjects at Level 2 and 3, and HE in FE to an age range of 16 – 60+. They had recently left FE.

They had employed approximately seven people on zero-hours, fixed-term, agency, and permanent and temporary variable contracts over a number of years in different FE settings. The casual lecturers worked alongside permanent part-time or full-time lecturers.

Policy

MPA felt that the use of casual lecturers was due to policy decisions by the Colleges senior management teams, heavily influenced by the overarching financial FE policies from Government. MPA could see that the benefits of casual contracts meant lecturing staff could be appointed quickly, and that it was financially better for the College as casual lecturers that could be disposed of easily, were frequently term-time-only, and often would contribute more to the department than they were paid to do.

Any port in a storm

MPA was conflictedly happy to have zero-hours lecturers but solely because it was important to have lecturers in front of students, and that, after taking on the responsibility as Head of Department the realisation that the Department was so understaffed made them feel grateful just to have anyone in front of a class.

> *I was relieved to have got staff in front of the students because the departments were in a pickle, so just to have staff in front of students was a good thing. My hands were tied. I don't think as a curriculum area manager … I had any say whatsoever. If you've got a gap in staffing, you have to fight with the higher echelons in power to try and get that gap plugged, … And if someone says that's going to be a part-time member of staff, that's hourly-paid or casual, you'll take it, because otherwise you've got your other staff that are on burnout because they're having to cover lessons or you're having to cover lessons. You'll take anyone you can get, rightly or wrongly.*

Balance the books

Balancing the books was acknowledged by MPA as very important, and they did not blame the senior management for using casual lecturers as they displayed a deep understanding of the Government influence on financial issues not only of the College in which they were working, but in FE as a whole. They also acknowledged that casual lecturers were less expensive, easily appointed and disposed of, and performed extra duties for which their renumeration did not cover.

> *It saves the College money as they could get rid of you straight away - if numbers dropped off and classes collapsed in the first part of the academic year, then you were disposable again.*
>
> *that they're putting in a load of work, but not getting paid for it, 'cause they're just getting paid for being in the classroom*
>
> *The reasons the college and my department used casual staff? FE, as we know, is the most underfunded sector of the sort of education landscape in the UK and hourly-paid lecturers are cheap.*
>
> *I can't see a time when casual contracts won't be used. Not until the financial position of FE institutions, in particular, has changed. Otherwise they're going to have to do it because their hands are tied, so I'm not blaming the institutions. I'm blaming you know the higher echelons that you know they're putting FE colleges, in particular in such a position where they're so financially unstable that they haven't got a choice other than to get cheap staff in front of students and unless that changes at a higher level, I don't think I don't think they've got a choice.*

However, they also stated negative financial aspects for the college of using casual lecturers, for example, the need to cover additional costs when organising trips for student, and, particularly, the high turnover of casual staff.

> *But it isn't always cheaper. So if someone's just employed to be there for three hours a day but you need two people to go on a trip or a visit, then, unless they get paid for it, they're not going to turn up, … I need to go to finance because the cost of the trip would be more expensive 'cause you're paying for that member of staff's time.*
>
> *You know, so you've got staff that are constantly looking for something that's going to be permanent. Because why would you put yourself through that year in year out and not have any money over the summer? Why would you do it - so constantly revolving door of staff. Staff didn't stay.*

Goose and golden eggs

MPA expressed the opinion that having permanent staff was preferable to enable the department to function properly, for the good of both the staff, the students, and teaching and learning.

> *If you have permanent staff then you can involve them in the whole way the department functions, … a department meeting … students at risk …, or you've got meetings with parents or parents' evenings the staff are at liberty to say I'm not attending those meetings or I'm not attending parents' evenings 'cause I don't get paid. Whereas if they're … salaried … there's an expectation there. It's a more cohesive team (permanent lecturers) … you can rely on them more. They can input into the design of the curriculum, supporting students more, the wider college life … extra-curricular things they can get involved in. I think, without your permanent members of staff, whether part-time or full-time all that is lacking. (also features in Chains and Weak links).*

MPA disliked the policy of using casual lecturers viewing it as detrimental to the FEC, themselves, their permanent lecturing staff, the students, and to the casual lecturers. They considered the policy was solely based on finances, to enable the FEC remove the associated costs of permanent employment contracts, and to enable a flexibility in lecturing hours allocation according to student numbers and course demands. MPA blamed the government's FE policies for placing FE in a precarious position, rather than the senior management teams in the FECs in which they had worked.

Working lives

The experience of having been a zero-hours term-time-only lecturer themselves greatly impacted MPA's views and expectations of the zero-hours lecturers that they employed. They displayed a profound understanding of how the working lives of the zero-hours lecturers were affected by the impermanence and *disposability* of their employment.

Chains and weak links

MPA displayed guilt about using casual contracts and the negative impact it had upon the casual lecturers; they did not wish to over-burden them, and they worried about their well-being. MPA found that this also impacted their own, and the permanent lecturing staff's well-being and mental health in a variety of ways. It led to an increase in MPA's, and the permanent lecturing staff's, workload, as they supplemented the zero-hours lecturers' work.

so it wasn't beneficial to my mental health and my workload so actually impacts upon the workloads of managers and other members of staff because the work that you can't pass on, from my experience to the part-time hourly-paid members of staff, for justifiable reasons, then falls back on other members of staff, so you might actually be doing one and a bit person's job

(is the flexibility that they offer is important?) Might be to the college financially or the institution, but it's not to the students, and it's not to the well-being of the staff members either, or the well-being of the staff members that the part-time hourly-paid casual staff work with.

The extra burden upon MPA personally, and the permanent lecturing staff affected not only their own well-being but student' achievements. MPA detailed how the use of casual staff impacted extra-curricular activities, Parents' evening, marking and moderation, attendance monitoring. curriculum planning and continuity of teaching leading to a disjointed student experience.

marking can be quite poor because the hourly-paid rate often includes a marking fee, but this you know there's £12 or £15 or whatever it is not going very far when you start dividing it down like that umm, so people aren't get pet getting paid, actually they're getting paid to be in front of the students, but they're not really getting paid for the marking they do after or the time for it. So it has huge impacts on the department

(impacted the students) parents' evenings so you know, feedback, quality of marking …. The fact that if a student doesn't turn up, we have to ring home at the end of the day … You can't expect a part-time hourly-paid member of staff to do that because once they've finished their hour then that's them done. So somebody else has to take that burden on or not, so you know, the students don't get chased in which case they can potentially do what they like, which affects their educational outcomes at the end

trips and visits were probably stifled … you haven't got a flexible workforce

so then things like attending meetings or working outside the classroom become a bit of a problem

putting planning into your lectures and things you always do … in your downtime or in your planning time, which part-time hourly-paid casual staff don't get, so they might not put as much effort, and rightly so, into the work that they're going to be delivering to the students.

On a knife edge

These difficulties were enhanced by what was perceived as a revolving door of staff as MPA talked about how the zero-hours lecturers would always be looking for a permanent role

or better hourly rates with another college. This left the department vulnerable as new lecturing staff had to be constantly re-trained, and left the students with little continuity.

> *Well, there was a massive turnover of staff. It was like a revolving door so you could never get anybody to stay … Why would you stay?*

MPA discussed how important it was for the manager to recognise the difficulties for the casual staff; the poor pay they experienced, the lack of work over the holidays and summer, and that they were not paid to do the same amount of work as the salaried staff. Although they also discussed how it was important not to put the additional work on the salaried staff who already went above and beyond their contractual obligations.

> *Just that managers need to be really understanding of what they can ask their casual staff to do. They have to have it in the back of the mind that they are being paid very poor wages. They're not being paid for all the other stuff that comes along with teaching and that salaried members of staff take on board and sometimes even for a salaried, salaried member of staff it's above and beyond … but then equally be well aware that they can't dump that on members of staff in the team 'cause that's going to affect them*

The casual lecturers were not part of the team, and turnover was high, creating well-being problems for the manager, the permanent lecturers and affecting students' teaching and learning. MPA worried for the casual lecturers' well-being, and this also affected MPA's personal stress and working life.

Power relationships

The power relationships perceived by MPA were again conflicted. They felt that the casual lecturers did not, over time, view themselves as part of the team as they realised that they were being asked to perform tasks for which they were not paid, and as the potential for a permanent job receded the power differential changed.

Dangling the carrot

MPA did not like the use of manipulation dangling the carrot to attempt to gain more from the casual lecturer that they were paid to do, but acknowledged that this type of manipulation, in other departments and colleges, in their experience, was commonplace.

> *whereas other managers … would manipulate people … there was always this carrot dangled of a potential permanent position, you know, keep going, do this much, when you go for the interview for the permanent position that's coming up, you know you might get the job … a potential permanent position and paying bills.*

The power is in their hands.

MPA thought that the casual lecturers were not able to speak openly and held back, and at first, gratitude for employment, and the possibility of a permanent role in FE encouraged the casual lecturer to work hard, attend meetings, and engage with the full activities of the department, with the manager holding all the power.

> *I don't think they were (open, contributed to work discussions), I think probably, they probably held back a little bit 'cause they didn't feel comfortable. They didn't feel that their job was secure. .... they didn't want to rock the boat initially, then, as time wears on and they've been there a few months and they realise that they're being asked more and more and they're not getting renumeration for that then, perhaps they were a bit more vocal, but initially, no, I feel like they held back. Maybe because they weren't secure in post, perhaps because they were disposable, and if you're disposable and you're relying on that income, you're not going to be open are you?*

MPC viewed the casual lecturer power shifting over time as they realised that a permanent role was not forthcoming, moving from a subjugated stance of not being able to speak openly or refuse work, to an attitude of defiant compliance and a work-to-rule, leaving when they gained a better offer.

> *So, initially, those people would be relieved to have a place of work. But then, as it goes on that they're going to stop putting the effort in which they shouldn't have to put the effort in because they're not. Getting paid for it*
>
> *(full members of the team) so yes. But acknowledging in the back of my mind that eventually there will come a time where they'll say no, sorry I'm not attending that meeting because I don't get paid for it.*
>
> *I'm not attending those meetings or I'm not attending parents' evenings 'cause I don't get paid for it.*

MPC perceived the managers' power was in the appointment and dismissal of casual lecturers but felt that their power was subsumed dictated by the policies of senior management and of Government, leaving them relatively powerless to make their own recruitment decisions.

Conclusion

MPA understood the Government policy influences upon FE and the reasons for casualisation but they not like using casual lecturers as they felt that it impacted their own working life, made them worry about the casual lecturers working conditions, affected the working lives of their permanent lecturers and hampered student outcomes and

achievements. They felt that although the casual lecturers held power in being able to refuse or withdraw from work which was not covered by their hourly rates, or leave at any time, MPA thought the casual lecturers suffered disbenefits from their contract type, and were insecure, unstable and disposable, with the power resting in the Managers' hands.

Appendix 17. LPB narrative report

Lecturer Participant B Pen Portrait

Background

Lecturer Participant B (LPB) had over nine years' lecturing experience in FE settings. Initially they had a one year fixed-term variable nine-hour (per week) term-time-only contract, at the end of this contract they were appointed on a permanent two-hour variable term-time-only contract, and they remained on this for over eight years. They had recently gained a 0.5 FTE permanent part-time contract, and retained the two-hour variable term-time contract, accepting additional hours when available. They also taught on a zero-hours contract in different FE settings. They had lectured in GFEC and OPFC settings in three different curriculum areas (two of which were shortage-subjects) from Entry level to Level 2. They were still in FE.

Policy

LPB believed that the policy of casualisation was solely for financial purposes; casual lecturers were inexpensive, and also performed additional duties for which they were not remunerated.

Balance the books

LPB voiced the opinion the use of casual contracts was because of money:

> *It's all to do with the budget, it's all to do with funding. They don't have to pay you the summer holidays if you're working as a (variable-hours) member of staff … you get 34 or 36 weeks paid [per year] …we don't get paid for 9 weeks over the summer.*

LPB also thought casual lecturers were seen by the senior managers … as a number. I really do think you're just hours and money and it all works out to the cost, doesn't it? Why would they pay us? Additionally, LPB felt the FEC used variable-hours lecturers because the student numbers, and course needs, would vary year in, year out; they could see the reasoning behind this saying:

> *it makes sense for the college not to have to pay a full-time permanent salary when they don't know the hours that are coming.*

LPB considered the FEC saved financially as the casual lecturers were expected to complete additional tasks that were supposed to be covered by their additional administrative time (for each lecturing hour they were paid an additional half-hour). LPB stated that at one

stage they were working 55 hours a week and … getting paid for 21 teaching hours to complete their work. The additional work included personal development and training time, covering classes, and extra marking and planning. LPB related how they had been told this:

> *by the (manager) … that there was some training … that we needed to do, but we weren't allocated any time to do that, cause [the trainer would] come in for two days over the summer to do this training. We had to catch up watching the videos - E-learning, but we weren't given any time to do that e-learning… We weren't paid because what they do is they say you need to fit it in as part of your [administrative time].*

The casual lecturers, at one stage, had also been expected to provide unpaid cover, LPD said:

> *FTE full-time staff can be expected to cover for two hours a week, on your full-time contract. So their expectation is that a [variable-hours lecturer] should cover two hours a week unpaid, without extra pay.*

And LPB was also instructed they:

> *needed to do their admin time in a non-teaching block where you can cover classes. So I was coming in and covering classes in my admin time.*

Professionally, LPB felt that it was their responsibility to complete marking for their students, and this also saved the FEC money as they saw that other casual lecturers were:

> *not doing the extra work. They're not working above their hours, which is their prerogative, but their workload was falling onto those of us that are willing to go above and beyond. We were doing the extra marking.*

LPB discussed their department manager's view, that the casual lecturers should perform the same duties as the permanent lecturers, regardless of the lesser hours they were paid per week and the lesser weeks they were paid per year stating:

> *like even things like marking and internal verification … We have to work really long hours to finish it. And the argument from the [manager and the] full-time staff is, well, you've gotta get it done. It's in your contract.*

Goose and golden eggs

LPB briefly discussed how casualisation meant that the FECs were not retaining … good staff as they thought there are some good staff that I know have left from the *(casual)* contract believing this was partly due to the salary. LPB detailed how they:

> *would struggle with a (casual) teaching contract if I was on my own … It's not enough to live on. You can't afford to live.*

Another **goose and golden egg** problem for the FECs created by the casual contract was as LPB had a variety of employments, if they were working two jobs and had to be somewhere, had accepted work somewhere else, I could not work if hours were allocated.

LPB viewed the FEC's casualisation policy was to minimise payroll costs, be able to vary hours as and when need required, and to save money by casual lecturers fulfilling administrative duties not covered by their pay. LPB believed this expectation appeared to be culturally embedded from senior management downwards, including the permanent lecturing staff. Casualisation seemed to be rooted in the organisation, or minimally within the departments in which LPB worked, and the use and efficacy of these contracts was not questioned.

Working lives

LPB articulated how they viewed themselves as a full member of the team although implicit in their story appeared to be a division between the permanent and the casual lecturers in how they were seen and treated. This seemed to be exacerbated by financial and job insecurities, and a lack of status created by the casual contracts.

Chains and weak links

LPB reported they felt:

> *like I was a full member of the team in that now because I've been here [so long]. I'm a full member of the team because of my longevity.*

However, rifts in the teams became clear as LPD perceived the nature of their contract, and the title of *(variable-hours lecturer)* reduced their status, voicing they:

> *(didn't) want it to say [variable-hours lecturer on the intranet as there shouldn't be a distinction. I think it should just call you a lecturer because I think it makes me feel a substandard citizen.*

This affected LPB personally and professionally as they stated they were:

> *not just after the money, 'cause I think that's the big difference for me, a lecturer or a (casual) lecturer. I feel … that if you're on a full-time lecturer salary, you're treated as a career professional. If you're on a (casual contract), you're treated as someone that's just dipping your hand in.*

This displayed a divergence in how LPB thought casual lecturers with division in the departments between the casual lecturers and the permanent lecturers. LPB gave an example of a team meeting:

> *they brought everybody from all different departments - It was commented that (casual) members of staff didn't pull their weight and I took offence to that because I was working 55 hours a week and I was getting paid for 21 teaching hours and I was working at least 55 hours*

The conflict between the casual lecturers and the full-time lecturers was also shown when LPB approached their manager after the summer where they had not been paid to come into the college to prepare, asking if they and the other casual lecturers:

> *could have the additional duties taken off us for two weeks just so we can catch up. And that was what we said in the meeting. After the meeting, the full-time member of staff went to speak to the [senior academic manager] to say as (part of) our terms and conditions of our contract, we are paid to do the same roles and responsibility. Therefore, the full-time member of staff thought it was unfair and discriminatory against them, for them to take on extra work while we were being paid.*

Lesson planning, preparation, and students' outcomes were also directly affected by the casual lecturers not being paid in the holidays and not being present during meetings. LPB discussed what had happened:

> *After one decision making meeting where the planning for the next year or the evaluation meetings - they happen after term time. And we're not invited … In September I would come and (another casual lecturer) would come to (deliver this) programme. And you would be expected to just run on with it. So where is our planning and our time? So, me and (another casual lecturer) were literally running round really fast to get stuff together for our classes. Whereas the full-time staff have had the summer to do that.*

As the casual lecturers did not know what classes they were going to be allocated for the next academic year problems in lesson delivery were seen by LPB as inherent as they needed schemes of work *[which]* hadn't been made over the summer because I wasn't there and in the team at the time. You don't know what classes you getting so why make a scheme of work?

On a knife edge

The financial difficulties faced by LPB as a consequence of their casual employment were difficult. LPB provided an example of how for years when I was working full-time hours, but not officially. I was earning £14 grand a year on a *[casual]* contract here showing how little they were paid for doing what they considered was a full-time job.

Even more worrying for LPB was their experience of their **knife edge** mortgage arrangements:

> *Five years ago, I wanted to move into a bigger house - the family had grown and I went to the mortgage company that had provided (their) mortgage originally. I went in to meet the manager … who went all through (their) childcare cost, jobs and contracts. The manager laughed, they pretty much laughed, and the phrasing was, 'We will let you continue to have your existing mortgage with us, but please don't apply for any additional funding from us.' And that was because I was on a zero-hour contract. In the end I did get a mortgage, but I had to pay a higher rate of interest.*

Eventually, after LPB had secured the 0.5 FTE permanent part-time contract they managed to secure a better mortgage deal. This experience highlighted the problems for casual lecturers acquiring financial products.

Non-payment over the holiday period was not the only issue for LPB related, the way pay was issued exacerbated the problem of the summer non-payment. Wages were paid a month in arrears, meaning work performed in September was not paid until the end of October. In addition, casual lecturers' pay was not annualised, with monthly pay varying throughout the year causing it really hard to budget and plan for LPB, and the non-annualisation often attracted higher monthly rates of national insurance.

Job insecurity and lecturing hours allocation was challenging. One year LPB was allocated 24 lecturing hours in September, but suddenly their

> *manager called me up on the Friday to say that the numbers hadn't come through for enrolments - they were cutting all of (their) hours and they were going to give me 12 hours instead of 24.*

This meant that their income was instantly cut by half.

LPB's multiple employments were also insecure. Their lecturing hours in the OPFC was on a project basis and that funding could stop at any time and they accepted any lecturing hours wherever they could, lecturing in many different subjects, for example at one stage teaching seven different separate classes. LPB taught in three different places across … four different contracts.

Financial and job insecurity issues also led to a lack of work-life balance and well-being, and the need to work for other employers contributed to a loss of downtime and holidays. LPB discussed how they:

> *always had some extra work over the summer [as it was] better than going nine weeks without pay and by half term I was exhausted -my colleagues that are full-time will say, oh, I'm just gonna keep that - I'll do that in half term or I'll - catch up that in half term, but I couldn't do that.*

Their downtime during the working day was equally impacted as having the four different roles " ... I average about seven minutes for my lunch, … some days I don't eat, I don't go to the toilet" and their stress levels were high as they detailed working 55 plus hours a week with 177 different learners, seven different classes and still only on 21 teaching hours. This affected LPB's mental health saying they were "burning out" and they were worried about the quality of the work.

LPB expressed how undervalued they had felt due to the casual contracts, particularly when they had their hours cut, *I* took that as a personal rejection because I felt I had done nothing but be flexible. After over eight years on a term-time-only casual contract they had approached HR saying that they worked near enough full-time. Can't you give us an annual contract? This did not materialise. They also felt resentful and angry at times especially when the permanent lecturer said casual lecturers:

> *weren't pulling their weight because in their perspective from September to June, we are paid to do the same job. (LPB's) argument was, but you get your holidays paid to do the extra work… and I just blew up and said that's not fair because I knew full-time members of staff in the department that come in at 8:55 and go home at 3:30 … I stay till 6 …. How is that fair? So I reacted in this training meeting and stormed out, and got really angry.*

LPB's professionalism caused them conflict, in a sense forcing them to complete additional work for which they were not paid. They felt strongly for their student's progression and outcomes as they stated:

> *As a passionate teacher. You put more in and unfortunately on zero-hours you can't let the ball slide at all and that they did it for the students. And (management) know I'm here for the students. It's not like I'm just doing a nothing job.*

Sadly, LPB thought the casual contract:

> *really impacts on my understanding of my worth. And whether I'm good enough because they make me feel I'm not good enough and the system makes me feel I'm not good enough because I can't get a full-time job,*

This led them to go through therapy and counselling.

Overall, the casual contract created difficulties for the casual lecturer, the students, the permanent lecturers, the department and the management. For the management and the department LPB identified casualisation caused a cultural divide between the permanent and non-permanent lecturers, with the permanent lecturers feeling that the casual lecturer should be subjected to the same workload as themselves, and the casual lecturers resentful

of this, feeling that as the permanent lecturers were paid for the full year, they should be allocated more work. The management had issues when allocating work if the casual lecturer was already contracted elsewhere. The students could suffer as the lecturers were allocated their classes and hours just before the term was due to start, with evaluation, lesson planning and preparation and marking casualties of the casual contract. The casual lecturers had many difficulties: conflict in their professionalism wanting to do the best for the students, but understanding that this led to working outside paid hours; having hours taken away at a moment's notice when student numbers fell; problems gaining financial products such as mortgages; work-life balance issues; resentment of permanent lecturers; and a feeling of valuelessness and a loss of self-worth.

Power relationships

LPB thought that the management generally held the power in the working relationships, and that whatever LPB did, it did not seem to change this balance.

Carrots and sticks

LPB had thought a **carrot had been dangled** and they would be rewarded if they were very flexible, that if

> *you're hardworking, if you go above and beyond, if you're flexible, if you're adaptable, you'll get recognised. They'll give you more work.*

but over the years this had not been the case in their experience. They had also assumed "*I* could go up to full-time. But I was kept on being given less."

In LPB's mind this had rapidly moved from a **carrot** to a **stick**. They thought they were too flexible … too kind. So *[their]* hours got took because *[the manage*men*t]* knew I'd try hard and this left them wondering if they were doing something wrong? … Not doing enough? This led to a feeling that LPB could not

> *let the ball slide, because if I let the ball slide at all I was scared for many, many years that by not achieving what they expect, which is impossible … I'll lose my hours. But over time I've been losing my hours anyway*

placing LPB in an unworkable situation – to keep working over their paid hours to impress, but by doing this losing all their own power as it allowed their management to expect them to continue this level of work, and yet LPB still lost lecturing hours despite this. LPB also tried to make sure that the right people see the effort I was putting in to attempt to not be

managed out and feeling that they had to work harder … forever trying to pick up extra work to prove my weight.

Adding to the stress and uncertainty, LPB and other casual lecturers had also been told:

> *if we're unhappy and we complain about (casual) contracts or we complain about the lack of cost of living increases that we should, you know, quit your job if you think it's unfair, you should find another job.*

The power is in their hands

The power that the lecturer held was to be able to say that they were not available to work. If they had already accepted work elsewhere (see Goose and golden eggs) they were physically unavailable to take additional hours offered. LPB worked with other casual lecturers who regularly refused to work over and above their contracted hours giving an example of a casual lecturer who would dictate days and times to come into the college as they were being paid for x teaching hours and they would do all their teaching hours and admin time over their own specified time frame. LPB cited an example where other casual lecturers had had enough and were

> *working to rule. They were doing as minimum as they could … saying, 'If you want me,' (quite rightly …) – if you want me to do all this, you need to give me the time to do it.*

Regardless of this lecturer power relationship demonstration the power rested, for LPB, firmly with the management, and to a lesser extent, the permanent lecturers. They felt that their professionalism was used (see On a knife edge) to subtly force them to perform unpaid work to ensure student achievement. They also thought that the permanent lecturers unfairly considered casual lecturers should perform the same duties as themselves even though they were only paid for 34 – 36 weeks of the year (see On a knife edge). The threat of not being allocated hours, or having hours removed from them was a prevalent theme throughout LPB's interview, leading to a subjugated power position of fear of speaking out (see On a knife edge and Carrots and sticks).

They did, however, feel that there was one positive for themselves of the casual contract and that they were not paid over the summer months, as they were planning an extended holiday, and on a permanent contract the time they were allowed to take as holiday in one block was shorter than the time they planned.

LPB had assumed that if they worked hard and proved themselves that the **carrot had been dangled** and they would be rewarded with a permanent contract, but they had quickly

realised that the **power was in the hands** of the management as they were aware that if they complained or spoke out, or did not perform additional work at a certain level they would lose their hours. They continued to display these behaviours after accepting the 0.5 FTE permanent part-time position as they needed additional casual hours to gain a living wage.

Conclusion

In conclusion LPB's perception of casualisation was negative. They thought the policy reasons for the use of the contracts were to reduce the FECs costs paying less salary to the casual lecturers, paying them less weeks of the year and expecting them to work unpaid hours. They also believed that the contracts disrupted the working lives of managers, by not being able to allocate hours if the casual lecturer had accepted hours elsewhere, the department and permanent lecturers where casual staff worked to rule leaving work that needed to be completed by other lecturers, and the divide between the permanent and the casual lecturers made the working environment difficult. LPB considered the student outcomes could suffer because of this. The balance of power lay with the management as they were able to give and take work away as they pleased. Personally, being on these contracts had been detrimental to LPB's work life balance, and mental health and well-being; they felt unworthy and valueless, stressed because of workload, fearful of speaking out, suffering from job and financial insecurity, and resentful and angry of their status and position in the FECs; consequently leading to them seeking counselling and therapy.

Finally, though LPB identified that the casual contract was not the sole reason for the inherent problems in FE.

> *It's beyond the casual and full-time tension, because we're all saying the same thing. We can't cope with the workload. We're all saying the same thing. We're just focusing on the nature of the contracts, instead of the nature of FE.*

	A	B	C	D	E
1	***MPA***	***MPB***	***MPC***	***MPD***	***MPE***
2	**Working lives**	**Working lives**	**Working lives**	**Working lives**	**Working lives**
3	The experience of having been a zero-hours term-time only lecturer themselves greatly impacted MPA's views and expectations of the zero-hours lecturers that they employed. They displayed a profound understanding of how the working lives of the zero-hours lecturers were affected by the impermanence and disposability of their employment.	MPB's own early experiences of being employed on zero-hours, temporary and fixed term terms had influenced their views on casual contracts, and they understood the working life difficulties associated with being employed on them.	The experience of having been a zero-hours term-time only and fixed term lecturer before moving into management impacted MPC's views of casual contracts and their understanding of the working life consequences for the managers, permanent lecturers and the departments in which they taught, the students, and the casual lecturers.	MPD was the only manager interviewed who had not begun their lecturing career on zero-hours contracts, although they had been on a casual contract – a full-time, one year, fixed term contract that had been made permanent at its contract end.	MPE experienced difficulties allocating work within the departments, noting the divide between permanent and casual lecturer expectations. This affected team integration in the departments and created resentments between the permanent and casual lecturers.
4	***Chains and weak links***	***Chains and weak links***	***Chains and weak links***	***Chains and weak links***	***Chains and weak links***
5	MPA displayed guilt about using casual contracts and the negative impact it had upon the casual lecturers; they did not wish to over-burden them, and they worried about their well-being. MPA found that this also impacted their own, and the permanent lecturing staff's well-being and mental health in a variety of ways. It led to an increase in MPA's, and the permanent lecturing staff's, workload, as they supplemented the zero-hours lecturers' work.	This understanding influenced how they allocated work to the casual lecturers, and also impacted upon their own workload, and implicitly the workload of the permanent FTE lecturers.	MPC felt that casualisation affected effective team working for the managers and lecturers. The casual lecturers were not paid to attend meetings, and even though, as a casual lecturer themselves they had participated as a full team they understood why the casual lecturers might not.	As mentioned in Any port in a storm, MPD had experienced "horrendous" difficulties with casual lecturers, particularly agency. They had agency lecturers who had not turned up without warning – with no communication from the agency, or lecturers who were, or had left without notice.	MPE had difficulties in managing permanent lecturers alongside casual lecturers; it created a divide between the permanent lecturers who could feel put upon as they were allocated more preparation, lesson planning etc, particularly if they were full-time as they were employed for the full year, not term-time only. For example, if a zero hours lecturer was given 4 hours teaching they would only be allocated 2 hours additional administrative time. and MPE felt it was unfair to ask the zero-hours lecturers to take on additional administrative work outside of this time.
6	"so it wasn't beneficial to my mental health and my workload so actually impacts upon the workloads of managers and other members of staff because the work that you can't pass on, from my experience to the part-time hourly paid members of staff, for justifiable reasons, then falls back on other members of staff, so you might actually be doing one and a bit person's job"	"I wouldn't ask them to do anything that they weren't paid to do because from my own experience, you know that's not great … I'm very much a do unto others as you would have them do unto you. .. I wouldn't ask people to do something that I wouldn't like to be asked myself."	"but the difficulty in having large numbers of *zero-hours lecturers* that are paid for what they do … They're not around to do meetings and to be fully part of those teams"	"Not turn up at all, and the agency don't let you know. We find out because our curriculum manager lets us know that, uh, so and so hasn't turned up from the agency today. But nothing no warning, they're just a no show."	there was a divide in that full-times for example, thought more was put on then. In reality it was because they have more hours … So it created a bit of a divide and for me as the manager in allocating that stuff …. It was very difficult … to manage because you could have someone on four *(lecturing)* hours and they would only get two hours admin time … where you're your full timers because they have more hours.."
7	*(is the flexibility that they offer is important?*) Might be to the college financially or the institution, but it's not to the students, and it's not to the well-being of the staff members either, or the well-being of the staff members that the part time hourly paid casual staff work with."	Although MPB understood the difficulties the casual lecturers faced (see On a knife edge) they were critical of the quality of the casual, particularly agency, lecturers, they had employed.	"As a *casual lecturer* I did do that so although I wasn't paid to come to meetings, I did come because I was still part of that team and I needed to find out what was happening in the area - information that was invaluable to me, yeah? But a lot didn't"	"For over 10 years now … we've endured exactly the same issues with *vocational* teachers that we had rock up on a Monday from the staffing agency and be utterly useless or in some cases might not even turn up."	This also indicated the additional pressure on MPE as they felt it was unfair to ask the zero-hours lecturers to take on additional administrative work outside of this time.
	The extra burden upon MPA personally, and the permanent lecturing staff affected not only their own well-being but student' achievements. MPA detailed how the use of casual staff impacted extra-curricular activities,	"mostly, horrendous. And horrendous from two perspectives. Most of all, there's from the business end of things … and from a teaching and learning perspective. I've been trying to think back … for an example of somebody …	MPC also felt that it increased their workload as they had to disseminate information that would otherwise have been communicated during meetings and check that student issues and curriculum were discussed within the	Implicit in MPD's comments was the effects upon the department and the management, and therefore upon students' learning and outcomes.	" … so I wouldn't really be able to ask them to do anything outside of that ."

Background | Policy | Working lives | Power | Conclusion | +

Appendix 19. Spreadsheet sample - Collation of lecturers' narrative reports

	A	B	C	D	E
1	***LPA***	***LPB***	***LPC***	***LPD***	***LPE***
2	**Working lives**	**Working lives**	**Working lives**	**Working lives**	**Working lives**
	Although LPA said they did not think casualisation affected their working relationships with the team or their managers there were implicit problems identified from their interview. They had discussed how integrating into the team, and being recognised as an equal within the team, were problematic. They also experienced financial inequalities (see Balance the books) and difficulties, and were insecure in their employment leading to stress and resentment, and, ultimately, the loss of an experienced FE lecturer to the sector.	LPB articulated how they viewed themselves as a full member of the team although implicit in their story appeared to be a division between the permanent and the casual lecturers in how they were seen and treated. This seemed to be exacerbated by financial and job insecurities, and a lack of status created by the casual contracts.	Casualisation led to difficulties for the casual lecturer to integrate fully into the department, for the management to effectively staff lectures resulting in additional work for themselves and the permanent lecturers, and for student achievement. Personally, the contracts created financial and job insecurities, and a feeling of valuelessness and a lack of self-worth for LPC.	The casual contracts could cause a lack of commitment, job and financial insecurities, conflicted professionalism and a resentment of the use of the commitment to student achievement to enforce additional unpaid work, and a perceived lack of status and mental stress.	Casualisation could cause difficulties for working life relationships, with a lack of commitment and buy in from the casual lecturers, with the lecturer able to withdraw their labour when they chose.. This could cause challenges for the managers, students and other permanent lecturers. Financial and job insecurities, and stress and well-being issues were also a produce for the casual lecturers of their employment status.
4	***Chains and weak links***	***Chains and weak links***	***Chains and weak links***	***Chains and weak links***	***Chains and weak links***
	LPA did not "feel completely part of the team" because they were "a temporary member of staff". They thought that this "impact*(ed)* in ways", particularly in communications, for example, "kind of being missed off emails". They also discussed their experiences in another GFEC where casual lecturers "had no access to resources and no access to photocopying, and it made it quite difficult for them".	LPB reported they felt: like I was a full member of the team in that now because I've been here [so long]. I'm in full member of the team because of my longevity, *area)*, you know. But they found *(them)* a desk and you know and were quite welcoming", and in this respect not the nature of their contract, and the title of (variable hours lecturer) reduced their status, voicing they: "(didn't) want it to say [variable hours lecturer on the intranet as there shouldn't be a distinction. I think it should just call you a	LPC, in one FEC, felt as if they were a "full member of the team" as " it was quite a small team on *(this curriculum* However, rifts in the teams became clear as LPB perceived treated differently from the permanent lecturers Unfortunately, the zero-hours contract, and their concurrent work in another FEC meant they were unable to attend the weekly meeting and	LPD in one FEC did feel as part of the team "in that people treated me as just another colleague … I were indistinguishable". However, they had different experiences where in "some colleges … the agency staff sit at those desks over there and [*the permanent lecturers]* talk to each other and nobody much bothers with the agency staff."	LPE felt that they were a member of the teams they worked in as they believed they needed to involve themselves fully in the working life of the FECs to enable them to deliver effectively in one college they had been "asked to do some of the management of the Computer literacy courses. And for me to achieve that I had to be involved".
5	They considered "because *[they]* were a temporary *[lecturer]* and because of the way that they've named the contract as well, as tutor, not lecturer, even though it was lecturing" added to their challenges integrating into the team, and being accepted by them, and although in meetings LPA felt they were " allowed to talk freely" they thought "it was a lack of communication from management about what, who I was and what my role was … that was part of the problem".	This affected LPB personally and professionally as they stated they were: not just after the money, 'cause I think that's the big difference for me, a lecturer or a (casual) lecturer. I feel … that if you're on a full time lecturer salary, you're treated as a career professional. If you're on a (casual contract), you're treated as someone that's just dipping your hand in	it wasn't great for *(them)* because if *(they'd)* have been full-time …*(they)* wouldn't have been timetabled on that Friday afternoon *(in the other college)* because that's the meetings. *(They)* would have gone to the meeting. And so *(they)* missed out on that. And that and getting to know *(their)* colleagues better or you know, just generally learning more about it getting more information about what was going on and things like that because of having these two contracts… but *(they)* couldn't turn down the work on Friday afternoon, it was two or three hours"	Another perceived **weak link** as a consequence of the casual contract was the lack of commitment of casual lecturers, and the reciprocal perceived lack of commitment of the FECs to the casual lecturers. LPD described this: I could have chosen to be less committed, less enthusiastic, and no one would have minded because you know the college were not committed to me	They also stated that "it also meant that I attended a lot of meetings when I wasn't actually being paid." This was a weak link, with the FECs relying upon LPE's professionalism and good will to perform necessary additional duties for which they were not renumerated.
6	LPA thought casualisation was of disbenefit to the FEC as it led to a lack of confidence and commitment: because of the nature of the job and the contract, it could be make you feel quite, it makes you feel less confident in that organisation. Because you are seen as the casual member of staff.	not just after the money, 'cause I think that's the big difference for me, a lecturer or a *(casual)* lecturer. I feel … that if you're on a full time lecturer salary, you're treated as someone that's just dipping your hand in.	However, in the other FEC "there was zero expectation that *(they)* would be anywhere near the college unless *(they were)* actually teaching. Literally turn up, teach, now go away again". This made it difficult for LPC to integrate, and also created difficulties for the manager in communications.	And they worked with other lecturers who "because they are on a zero-hours contract" had "little commitment, they don't feel they have to give them whole commitment to it". This lack of commitment also expressed itself, in LPD's view, as the ability of the casual lecturer to leave easily (see Goose and golden eggs), which could cause issues for student continuity and management staffing	Not being able to speak out in the meetings was another weak link alluded to by LPE: if I had identified something that something that wasn't working very well I didn't like to say to the manager because then they might not give me anymore work.