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Leadership for Inclusion: Navigating the Evolving Landscape of the Further Education and Training (FET) Sector in Ireland

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Abstract

The Further Education and Training (FET) sector in Ireland offers a significant level of diversity, in student population, level of study, and form of delivery. As such, inclusive provision is crucial to the sector's success as a viable learning pathway. Key to this process is the work of leaders, as there is ample evidence of their impact on effective inclusive policy and practice. The vast majority of existing research in this area has focused on primary, post-primary, and higher education sectors with an evident lack of such work in FET. This project addresses this gap, illuminating perspectives and practices around leadership for inclusion in Irish FET settings, based on first-hand accounts from senior leaders. Five leaders in a range of FET settings participated in an exploratory qualitative inquiry with two researchers. The findings reveal a common conceptualisation of inclusion as rights-based and far-reaching where leaders are evidently committed to fully including all members of their respective populations. Leaders acknowledge their own role in modelling inclusive practice, but somewhat dichotomously, highlight a lack of visibility around inclusive teaching and learning. Finally, they acknowledge that FET's diminished status in comparison to other sectors has resulted in difficulties around gaining and employing supports for learners, but they also demonstrate a belief that this same status has undergone a sense of renewal in recent times.

Keywords: further education and training, leadership, inclusion, Ireland

Introduction

Recent reports highlight increasing diversity in the learner population as well as form of provision and pathways in Further Education and Training (FET) in Ireland (Solas, 2021a). Inclusive provision is evidently central in successfully navigating this evolving landscape as it reaches beyond the affordance of resources and pedagogical modifications, embracing learners' preparation for active and full participation in wider society (Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), 2021). The work of leaders plays a pivotal role in such processes (Kugelmass & Ainscow, 2004). Existing research on leadership and inclusion appears to neglect insights from the FET sector. This project attempts to address the absence of such literature, illuminating the experiences of senior leaders, and drawing out potential lessons for the wider FET sector and indeed beyond.

Background to FET in Ireland

The FET sector in Ireland offers qualifications at Levels 1-6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). These include post-leaving certificate programmes, traineeships, apprenticeships, and community and adult education programmes (ETBI, 2021). A diverse range of settings cater for the FET community, including (but not limited to) colleges and institutes of FET, Youthreach centres, training facilities, prison-based education, and adult learning centres. Solas (the Irish word for light) is the state agency responsible for funding, planning, and monitoring FET in Ireland on behalf of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) and recent figures from the agency illustrate an increasingly diverse learner population (Solas, 2021a). This data reveals that almost half of the c.150,000 learners enrolled are 35-64+ years of age, a fifth are unemployed, approximately 10,000 have reported having a disability, over a quarter report attaining a lower secondary

education or below at the time of enrolment, and they represent c.200 nationalities (Solas, 2021a, Solas, 2021b).

The sector has experienced significant reform in recent years, with ongoing attempts toward centralisation of functions and vision, professionalisation of its workforce, and the strengthening of opportunities for an increasingly diverse population of learners to contribute to broader social and economic development (Solas, 2020). Most recently it has witnessed moves toward greater alignment with higher education, as the current government envisions a more unified tertiary system (DFHERIS, 2022). This of course contrasts sharply with the sector's oft-cited positioning as the 'poor relation' of the broader education landscape, where it has been viewed not as a highly regarded pathway for learning and career development in its own right, but merely as an option for those who fail to gain access to higher education (McGuinness et al., 2014). Nonetheless, Solas (2020) espouses an exciting time ahead, where the sector can seize the opportunity for greater collaboration and cohesion, but in doing so "must simplify its structure and learning pathways, facilitate easier access, ensure a more consistent learner experience, and build a more powerful identity within communities and potential learners" (p. 8). A key element in this process is the retention of a focus on active inclusion and community development as central to FET provision, where the sector will continue to pledge its support to local communities and to the proactive participation for the most marginalised groups, as it recognises the complexity of learners' needs across the sector (Solas, 2020).

Literature Review

The literature review offers a conceptualisation of leadership for inclusion both in education settings more broadly and in the field of FET, with some reference to the Irish context.

Conceptualising Leadership in Education

Research and policy development on leadership in education has grown substantially in recent decades (Bellibaş & Gümüş, 2019). There is however a lack of consensus on what constitutes educational leadership where conceptualisations are based on "a wide spectrum of knowledge, characteristics, dispositions, and skills containing competing perspectives and understandings with little agreement of what is or should be included in the discipline" (Sellami et al., 2022, p. 770). Evidently, the process of "social influence" is key as leaders support the building of a vision and motivation of individuals to realise this vision, through verbal and nonverbal interactional processes where "meaning, context and goal setting are interwoven" (Ruben & Gigliotti, 2016, p. 11), as they "enlist the aid and support of others in the attainment of common as well as ethical tasks" (Sarwar et al., 2022, p. 2).

James et al. (2020) situate leaders at the heart of education communities, whose actions and principles are aligned with their wider social and ethical environment. Leadership therefore emerges through meaning-making interactions that carry key messages about institutional practices, culture, values, and the setting's fundamental purpose. Purpose here arguably aligns with broader notions of vision or mission, and there is clear evidence of how leaders impact the construction, nurturing, and communication of these elements within institutions (Kantabutra & Avery, 2010). This institutional vision is inseparable from the leader's personal vision as it is

grounded in the “personal experiences and values which form their motives and personality” (Yoeli & Berkovich, 2010, p. 451).

Leadership in FET

There is a lack of literature pertaining to leadership in FET in Ireland. However, research from other jurisdictions, and specifically the United Kingdom offers a range of useful insights. Evidently leaders’ roles in these settings have shifted in tandem with the introduction of cost control measures, as well as “private sector management techniques” and “consumerist performance measures and targets” (McTavish & Miller, 2009, p. 351). Collinson and Collinson’s (2009) study with FET leaders revealed a desire for greater flexibility and creativity, with less emphasis on fulfilling managerialist functions. Leaders here called for enhanced capacity for self-regulation where they can respond to the growing economic and social challenges in their local communities. Lambert’s (2013) study offers evidence of three observable dimensions in FET leadership, that is, external-public, internal-public, and internal-private. External-public refers to the highly visible outward facing position where leaders serve the interests of their settings with stakeholders. Internal-public involves the administrative and pedagogic functions of the role, while internal-private refers to non-visible aspects such as strategic thinking and developing the vision of the setting in collaboration with others. A variety of authors offer similar evidence of multiplicity and blending of styles and roles amongst FET leaders (Collinson & Collinson, 2009).

Conceptualising Inclusion

Inclusion is a broad term which is both elusive and highly contested (Florian & Spratt, 2013). Traditionally focused on learners with disabilities, there has been an expansion of this

concept to include all who are at risk of being marginalised or excluded (UNESCO, 2001). Varied legislative mechanisms have attempted to offer clarity and direction here, with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (United Nations, 2006) asserting that member countries will support the inclusion of students into a fully supported education system with "an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences" (para. 11). It therefore places the human rights and dignity of the individual at the centre and affirms that impairment does not equate to deficit, nor does it substantiate reasons to deny individuals of their basic human rights (Degener, 2016). This emphasises the context in which the individual is situated and explores key social, cultural, and economic factors (Quirke et al., 2023). Such a shift towards a human-rights approach to inclusive provision moves beyond individual supports examining how systems are structured to ensure they can meet the needs of all learners (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE), 2013a). Creating environments where each learner can have a sense of belonging is key to inclusive pedagogy as it emphasises what teachers do in facilitating learning for all as opposed to what works for some with mere 'add-ons' for the few (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

Inclusion in FET

While most research on inclusive education focuses on compulsory sectors, some publications do offer insights on inclusion in FET, again though primarily from the United Kingdom. In their seminal guide to teaching in the sector Curzon and Tummons (2013) refer to inclusive practice in FET as concerned with an approach that "endeavors to encourage the fullest participation of learners" where educators are committed to an ethical framework that "recognizes and respects quality and diversity, and the potential of all learners" (p. 292) and goes

beyond learners with specific learning difficulties. This stands in contrast to early sector-specific work from Partington (2003) whose project on inclusion of learners with disabilities demonstrates that FET tutors were ill-prepared to fully include such learners. While staff welcomed inclusion in principle, the nature of specific disabilities led to the adoption of a deficit model of provision. Such assertions are supported by Wright (2006) whose work highlighted exclusionary practices, a lack of cohesive planning and policymaking, and increased pressures around economic success criteria. The focus on the latter also features elsewhere with authors highlighting a dichotomy in some FET provision. Meir (2018) aligns early efforts in the UK to foster inclusivity in FET with "a desire for social justice" but highlights how shifts toward performativity and increased marketisation, accompanied by imposed austerity, have left "inclusive practice across the sector … significantly under threat" (p. 333). Wider reports on FET have highlighted the importance of staff and leadership who are committed, motivated and highly qualified, with ongoing access to continuous professional development. They also emphasize the importance of distributed leadership, moving from a top-down to a more collaborative approach (EASNIE, 2013b).

In the Irish context, fostering inclusion has been identified as a pillar of the FET strategy (Solas, 2020) where there is an understanding that FET provision must be accessible by all. However, evidence points toward ongoing challenges in engaging particular groups in FET, including some ethnic minorities, for example, members of the Traveller or Roma communities, those experiencing homelessness, and those with substance misuse issues (ETBI, 2021). Further challenges include inconsistency in forms of support across FET settings, and an evident disjuncture between FET and its sectoral neighbours, that is, post-primary and higher education,

where specific personnel have roles regarding managing inclusive provision. Currently, this practice is not part of the landscape of FET across all providers (ETBI, 2021).

With regard to inclusive pedagogy Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is widely promoted as being a good fit to support the inclusion of and for all (International Disability Alliance, 2021). Currently in Ireland, the UDL Framework is highlighted in policy, strategy, and reports on inclusive education in the FET sector as being a key component of inclusive provision in FET (Quirke & McCarthy, 2020). However, evidently there is a significant gap in research on how teachers prepare universally designed lessons and what the benefits and challenges of implementing UDL are for both the learner and educator (Reynor, 2020).

Leadership for Inclusion: Models and Typologies

Leadership for inclusion in education can be defined "as a reform that supports and welcomes diversity among all learners" and is therefore "understood as eliminating social exclusion that is a consequence of responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender and ability" (Vitello & Mithaug, 1998, cited in Kugelmass, 2003, p. 3). Such leaders demonstrate a vision that all learners should benefit from "meaningful, high quality" education "in their local communities" (EASNIE, 2020, p. 8). Wider definitions emphasise a focus on valuing individual difference through "respect and equality", as the aim of leadership for inclusion "is to attain mutual goals through creating, changing, and innovating while balancing needs and appreciating differences" (Ackaradejruangsri et al., 2023, p. 3699). Similarly, while acknowledging the presence of inevitable 'goals' in educational processes, Devecchi and Nevin (2010) attest that leadership for inclusion is fundamentally centred on people, and therefore prioritises the wellbeing of all community members, hence rejecting any consideration of staff or students as mere instruments in the process of external goal achievement.

Some authors have focused on styles or typologies of leadership in the context of inclusion. In exploring leaders' actions and behaviours many studies have done so through the lens of instructional leadership. This refers to a form where leaders play a central role in constructing and articulating the vision of the institution, managing teaching, learning and assessment processes, and nurturing a positive climate (Hallinger, 2007). More recent work on inclusionary leadership has shifted toward distributed, democratic, and social justice models (DeMatthews, 2015). At its heart distributed leadership concerns the "interactions, rather than the actions" of leaders, as it "acknowledges the work of all individuals who contribute to leadership practice", necessitating "lateral, flatter decision-making processes" for organisational change (Harris & Spillane, 2008, p. 31). The values-based premise of democratic leadership, as well as its capacity for nurturing ethical dialogue around diversity, and empowerment of education communities in challenging contexts, also leave it well placed to underpin leadership for inclusion (Szeto, 2021). Finally, transformational leadership is frequently linked to inclusive education, via its emphasis on reforming institutional culture, enhancing teacher agency and efficacy, and attending to outcomes for all learners (Romanuck Murphy, 2018).

Although grounded in a fundamental distributed leadership premise, Morrissey's (2021) inclusionary leadership model relies on a triad of interconnected typologies, namely values leadership, managerial leadership, and teacher leadership. Values-based leadership is key as attitudes and beliefs are fundamental to inclusive practice, as is teacher leadership as successful inclusion depends on autonomous decision-making, authentic and relevant professional learning, and professional competence. Managerial tendencies are a necessary element as inclusive provision requires important structural accommodations and the fulfilment of a range of statutory functions. The wider leadership literature cautions against any an excessive focus on managerial

leadership as it may lead to managerialism, where a leader's attention is directed more toward bureaucratic processes and external accountability (Bush, 2018).

Inclusionary Leaders: Characteristics and Practices

The research also offers evidence of specific characteristics that underpin inclusionary leadership. These include "advocating for inclusion, educating participants, developing critical consciousness, nurturing dialogue, emphasizing student learning and classroom practice, adopting inclusive decision- and policy-making strategies, and incorporating whole school approaches" (Ryan, 2006, p. 11). In Northouse's (2021) inclusive leadership model leaders demonstrate pro-diversity beliefs, open-mindedness, and cognitive complexity. Dorczak (2013) offers a comprehensive series of characteristics for leadership in inclusive cultures. These include the valuing of all according to their potential, capitalising on opportunities to hear all voices, giving adequate space for personal and professional development, and an acceptance of ongoing change processes.

Evidently inclusionary leaders exhibit a range of practices. These include modelling through language and gesture in their interactions with educators and learners, collaborative and often multi-disciplinary planning for inclusive provision based on quality data, and the facilitation of meeting structures to allow educators time and space to address learner need (Carter & Awabi, 2018). Such leaders also facilitate educators' engagement in meaningful professional learning and nurture trusting relationships via open dialogue with educators about their experiences in schools and their life beyond. They demonstrate thoughtful resource ascertainment and allocation, including personnel placement, and actively connect with external partners in realising the wider vision of inclusion (DeMatthews et al., 2020). In actuating this vision, leaders evidently face a range of challenges. These include logistical difficulties around

funding and the facilitation of impactful professional learning which can be challenging to source. Teachers' attitudes to inclusion can also impede progress as they may view such provision as beyond their role, a position which may be both reflective of and reinforced by the perspective of wider communities towards inclusive schooling (Alkaabi et al, 2022). Further difficulties arise where leaders are overwhelmed by administrate tasks and are therefore unable to participate in instructional planning or provision (Dennehy et al., 2024).

This review of the literature demonstrates the intricate and evolving nature of educational leadership for inclusion. The varying theories, models, characteristics, and behaviours associated with such leaders highlights the inherent complexity of their role, as they attempt to cultivate inclusive cultures and practices while balancing the demands of internal and external stakeholders. This challenge is perhaps more acute in the context of FET due to its traditional positionality in the education and economic landscape. However, as the review has evidenced, little is known as to how leaders in FET capitalise on the sector's ongoing attempts to meet the needs of a diverse population of learners while simultaneously navigating sectoral reform.

Theoretical Framework

In accepting that leadership for inclusion is socially constructed, contextually bound, and made visible through discernible practices, this project was further underpinned by ecological systems theory (EST) (Anderson, 2017; Anderson et al., 2014). EST has been used in a wide range of projects exploring inclusive education (Kamenopoulou, 2016; Tahir et al., 2019) and educational leadership (King & Travers, 2017; Shah, 2023). EST views the individual at the centre of a series of nested interdependent systems. At the most local level (microsystem) the individual "plays a direct role, has direct experiences and social interactions with others" while the next system (mesosystem) features the interaction between two of the individuals' settings

(Neal & Neal, 2013, p. 276). Beyond these more localised settings, the exosystem accounts for structures in which the individual may not directly participate but are nonetheless impacted by, while the macrosystem accounts for the impact of powerful cultural and ideological factors. This framework facilitated the exploration of leadership for inclusion at varying levels, that is, at an individual level, a local setting-based level, a wider sectoral level, and an "outermost level, comprising the cultural constructs, social and economic conditions, and history" (Fivush & Merrill, 2016, p. 307). Interviews therefore explored a wide range of topics and ideas, including individual constructions of the phenomenon, visible (and non-visible) practices and perspectives in settings, the impact of wider policies and developments, and broader societal factors.

Methodology

There is a lack of research pertaining to leadership for inclusion in FET, and this is particularly acute in the Irish context. This therefore necessitated an exploratory inquiry approach (Patton, 2002). Shani (2023) describes exploratory inquiry as "eliciting experience by generating an understanding of what has taken and is taking place" (p. 180). Schein and Schein (2013) refer here to remaining in a mode of "humble inquiry" where researchers emphasise "exploratory questions that minimize telling and maximise letting the other person tell his or her story in as unbiased a way as possible" (p. 42). As such, this approach focuses on qualitative data collection around ambiguous phenomena with the aim of providing evidence from lived experience (Birchall, 2014).

Participants

Prior to commencing the study ethical permission was granted by the researchers' institution. Notifications seeking participants for the study were sent to senior leaders in varying

FET services. This included the Education and Training Boards (ETB), Youthreach service, Prison Education service, Training, and Adult Education services. The notification asked directors to share with leaders in their respective networks. Inclusion criteria stipulated that leaders should be in a senior position, that is, principals or deputy principals, directors, or managers. To indicate willingness to participate, potential participants completed a Microsoft Form, after which they were contacted by the researchers to clarify any issues and answer queries. Five participants eventually consented to be interviewed. Due to the relatively small community of leaders in Irish FET settings and the risk to anonymity biographic details are limited here and pseudonyms are used throughout. Both Annette and Paul hold leadership positions in colleges of further education and have done so for several years. Likewise, Claire has been in a similar position for a significant period, albeit in the prison education service. Priya and Jackie have less years of experience in a leadership role than the other participants. Priya is employed in a training centre while Jackie is employed in adult education. The participants have a range of relevant qualifications, including post-primary teacher certification and/or varying qualifications in teaching in FET and adult learning.

Data Collection

Data was collected via in-depth semi-structured interviews. This form of interviewing can facilitate engagement in a dialogic exchange "through which the interviewer can excavate deeper layers of a particular topic" (Das et al., 2020, p.2). The interview is fundamentally conversational in nature, and in this case, participants were supported in telling their story of leading inclusion in their respective settings, focusing on a range of aspects (Guion et al., 2011). Questions and prompts included:

- Tell me about your understanding of inclusive education.

- What does inclusivity look like in your setting?
- As a leader, describe your role in fostering inclusion in the setting.
- What challenges do you face as a leader in supporting inclusivity?
- What opportunities for enhancing inclusivity exist in the setting, and what impact can you have?

Participants were given the option of completing their interview via Microsoft Teams or in person. Two opted for the latter, while the remaining three used the online platform. All interviews were audio-recorded. Both researchers had prior experience in completing research projects utilising interviews. Prior to commencing they collaboratively worked through the planned questions and topics for exploration and agreed expectations around the dialogic and narrative tone of the interviews. The emphasis here was on allowing leaders to unpack their own journeys regarding inclusionary leadership. Due to researcher and participant availability, it was agreed that one researcher could conduct two interviews, while another would conduct three.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began with verbatim transcription of the recordings. The process then drew on Braun and Clarke's (2012) six-step thematic analysis method as an accessible yet sophisticated and systematic approach. The first step here required an immersion in the text through reading and re-reading, followed by open coding (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Both researchers completed the coding of two transcripts before meeting to discuss initial codes, where we reflected on commonalities and points of difference. Following this reflective dialogue we independently coded the remainder of the transcripts. We then met again to discuss emergent themes, that is, where we could see codes that could be organised together into broader themes.

Having identified four preliminary overarching themes, we each took some time to read and review the data associated with these to ensure ‘fit’ with the overall dataset. This resulted in the collapsing of one theme into an existing theme, and the highlighting of several subthemes. The final steps involved the defining of each theme, wherein we endeavoured to tell its story, using verbatim quotes to support.

Trustworthiness

Ensuring quality in any qualitative study requires a consideration of its overall trustworthiness (Connelly, 2016). This study was guided by Shenton’s (2004) framework for addressing trustworthiness, where it was grounded in an early familiarity with the contexts of the varying settings in which the leaders worked and involved complete transparency around the research process. It proceeded to use conventional and well-established methods to gather and analyse data, including iterative questioning, where researcher and participant could return to topics and ideas for clarification and elaboration. The overall process involved frequent debriefing between researchers where we engaged in critically reflective dialogue. Finally, as a form of member checking the findings were shared with participants who were asked for any further input.

Results

The overall process identified three overarching themes and several related subthemes.

Theme 1: Realising a Vision of Inclusion

The participants offered expanded conceptualisations of inclusion and a common commitment to nurturing inclusive practice. However, while lauding the efforts of their staff, the

visibility of such practices was not always apparent. Professional learning evidently proved key in realising this vision.

Conceptualising Inclusion

While recognising the historical affiliation of inclusion with specific groups, the participants highlighted an expanded configuration:

> It's a bigger term. You're bringing in everyone so that it really is a welcoming space with the appropriate supports for absolutely everybody. Regardless of whether it's a need which is physically based or mentally based, or whether it's something to do with their orientation or their background, or their racial needs. (Paul)

Annette commented on her own development here:

> I had a very limited definition of what inclusivity was. And now I realise, I suppose maybe just time, experience, whatever … I think it's anybody who needs a little bit of support or a lot … whether it's language or whether it's with identity or whether it's with additional needs.

Claire also made a distinction here but connected any narrowness in interpretation to her own experience, particularly in the prison system. Despite knowing it was much wider than "traditionally marginalised groups", she didn't always think beyond this because:

> People with physical disabilities, we very rarely have any. We've had people who've been deaf, but we've found it very difficult to help them. And then in the prison, LGBT people, it's difficult being in jail. It's unspoken.

Overall, therefore, as a result of experience and ongoing interaction with diverse groups the participants' conceptualisations of inclusion had shifted over time, from a traditional focus on those with disabilities to a broader consideration that accounted for anyone in the setting facing potential barriers.

Leader and Educator Commitment

This expansive consideration was clearly underpinned by a sense of commitment in their settings. Paul described inclusion as "embedded into everything that we do". Annette described her team as "doing a really decent job" in how they supported students, referring particularly to the work of their (admittedly under-resourced) Guidance Counselling team. Priya also commented on the commitment of educators:

> The instructors are with them all day, every day for their course … for sometimes up to a year if they're doing a traineeship ... So, they deal with every single issue you could imagine and it's great for the students … because they have an anchor.

This vision of inclusion was also informed by the leaders' own personal and professional journey. Paul commented on personal circumstances around disability that strengthened his commitment to inclusivity while Annette also commented on how the "biggest advocates for inclusion in our staff are those that have family members who require additional support". Claire spoke about her own journey, where she "hated school and couldn't wait to get out" but knew she "wanted to teach". She spoke about teachers in her first school as being somewhat unfair in their description of groups or individuals as problematic, and how this resonated with her as:

> I probably was the Student A in Class A in my school ... There was nothing wrong

with her … I just hate that thing of being warned and Class A to me ended up being the ones where there was a bit of life in them.

Such commitment was evidently challenged at times. Paul highlighted how "there are always challenges when you ask someone to change" but he never experienced any real "kickback", while Annette commented on how the age profile of some educators meant that certain adaptations "might have been challenging" and there will also be staff who "just don't get it … but we have to make allowances". She commented on specific cases, including those with mental health needs where they "struggled to support these students", but she actively involved external agencies here as "sometimes it's better or easier to hear from someone else … because you don't know if you're doing the right things". This reflective stance was echoed by other participants, as they readily admitted that they may not have all of the solutions and experiences may go awry, but the key was to learn from such opportunities and remain resilient.

Overall, the leaders characterised both their own efforts and those of the staff in their settings as committed to cultivating inclusivity. This sense of commitment was impacted not only by present situations with increasing diversity in their settings, but also by past personal experiences. However, while remaining committed they realised that inclusive provision was an ongoing journey that required the management of challenges and seeking of solutions.

Realising Inclusion through Specific Practices

The participants highlighted a range of inclusive practices. Jackie described how she modelled how to:

speak about staff, students, people, things that are happening … It's about me

> modelling how I want that and ensuring through meeting and talking at training with my own staff … this is how everybody who comes into our centres are treated.

Other practices included specific opportunities to support connectedness between students, for example, “Traveller Pride Day, ESOL days and international student days” (Claire), or “coffee mornings for mature students” (Annette). Annette also commented on “whole college events” where they’re not “separating students out” as “everybody’s in this together”. Jackie went further here and involved the local community:

> So, we have our annual quiz, and we have our book launch, and we’ll have our party, and we have … our garden and different things that are not just for you and your literacy class [or] your English language class, but for all of us together.

Participants commented on some specific pedagogical strategies. Priya highlighted the establishment of a voluntary Learner Support Group, as well as a range of other elements:

> We have learning support. We have language support. We have people who look after your mental health and we have technology support … whatever it is, we’re going to start implementing and putting structures in place to make sure that everyone can learn in a similar way to everyone else.

Similarly, Annette commented on individualised support in class where “if you’ve got a busy class and you’re teaching them something and you need to support extra students, the students will work ahead ... and you give the individual support. I think staff do the best that they can”.

Evidently some participants found it difficult to articulate how inclusivity was

cultivated by individual educators in their settings, but in keeping with the sentiments above did not doubt their commitment. Claire spoke of "inclusive practice happening by stealth" while Paul described how its embedded nature meant no particular element "stood out a mile". Annette believed this was specific to the sector:

> I honestly don't know because in further education there's no access for us into the classroom. There's no way of knowing what happens. So, the only way we know that things are going well or not so well is if there's complaints or if there's issues. I can only assume that things are going well. It's not a great way to be.

Claire highlighted how "it's nearly left to individual teachers just to do what they can", while Priya commented on its sometimes ad-hoc nature and how "most of the time they don't realise they're actually supporting learners as much as they are".

Professional Learning for Inclusion

Professional learning was key to the leaders' vision. They were committed to supporting staff in their in-career development for inclusive practice. Paul highlighted how "I have to be shown to be the first one to take part in it and to do it". Priya spoke about "getting staff to the point where they can engage … and do all that professional development". She commented on a "step change" and an absence of "resistance", where it's "around keeping the student at the centre of things and making sure the staff are supported". Paul also described spending "an awful lot of time on continuing professional development (CPD) to make sure that the staff are very well aware of their requirements". At times this is facilitated by external agencies and at others takes the form of "peer to peer learning". Similarly, in Annette's setting they engage in "CPD as much as we can" while

realising that “you can give all the CPD in the world, but it’s how students actually get the benefit. That’s the hard to thing to know”. Claire however highlighted the challenges offered by CPD, as although “we have our responsibility as leaders to keep our staff as modern as possible in terms of their teaching and learning ... I don’t think there’s a lot for leaders... around inclusion and diversity”. Priya however reflected on her participation in specific inclusion programmes as “through the process of doing short courses or the post grad, the more clarity there is around my own thinking and where I want to go.”

Overall, the leaders clearly valued CPD for educators to support inclusion in their settings. This took a number of forms and was facilitated both internally and externally. They also clearly valued opportunities for their own CPD as inclusionary leaders.

Theme 2: Diversity in the FET Learner Population

While acknowledging a broad understanding of inclusion, the participants demonstrated a heightened awareness of the increasing diversity in FET settings and the resultant impact on practices and perspectives. They demonstrated a deep awareness of their learners’ identities and were also aware of the often-transitory nature of the population.

Supporting Transition into and through FET

The participants demonstrated an acute awareness of the multiple and sometimes shifting identities of the FET population as they bring a range of prior experiences, perspectives, and expectations. Paul described the population of his setting as made up of mostly “youngsters who are just trying to get into a university programme”, while Annette commented on the setting as a “second choice” to higher education but added that this positioning “is changing in the last couple of years”. Both also referred to mature learners,

who can bring with them “certain expectations” (Annette) and require specific supports as they may be “struggling coming back to education and find it very daunting to do all this” (Annette). Participants also identified students with specific needs, including learners on the autism spectrum, those experiencing challenges with literacy and numeracy, and learners with intellectual disabilities. Annette commented on their status regarding support where they “have a large cohort of students with additional needs” as “we’ve gained a bit of a reputation … if you come to this college, you’ll get looked after.”

The Nature of Diversity in FET

The participants highlighted not only diversity within the overall FET population, but within their individual settings. Priya described the complex makeup of learners in her setting, including an apprenticeship cohort who “really want to be here … because passing means that they go up in their pay rate”. An equally committed, albeit unpaid, group of trainees attended at night and a third group of “long-term unemployed” learners attended so as to maintain their jobseekers benefit status. However, despite their determination to succeed, these varying groups present with an “array of difficulties and problems”, including “learning support and mental health issues”. This somewhat fragile characterisation featured elsewhere in the narratives, where in an adult education setting Jackie described how they “prioritised the wellbeing of our students above other things … we are aware some of our students are not in a great place ... in terms of their living accommodation, their social situation, their health situation”. Similarly, Annette commented on the population of Ukrainian learners who may require support due to the “traumatic background” of their transition, while Jackie highlighted the needs of those with refugee or asylum status.

The participants recognised the importance of considering ‘who’ their learners were,

and the trajectory they had experienced up to that point, as key to meeting their needs. Priya commented on how some of the learners may "have had substance abuse issues" but in the setting "they need to present in here. They need to clock in and clock out, and they need to account for themselves at all times". Claire described the complexity of the prison-based population, where distinct groups are on "protection from other groups", necessitating strategic planning on the part of educators. She also highlighted the evident over-representation of members of the Traveller community in the prison system and how this is the "only group that have been identified as having special needs in education terms", so they engaged with a "Traveller Liaison teacher who tailors programmes to them". Claire recognised the fundamental journey that had brought learners to this point in prison, hence her philosophy of learning focused on a need to instil a sense of value in the learners, supporting them in "critical thinking" processes about valuing themselves and indeed others. Similarly, Jackie recognised the specific benefits of cultural diversity offered by her setting, and how increasing the community education programmes could impact wider inclusion:

> Sometimes this is the only place where people actually meet people from other cultures or people who have different lifestyles from them … It's a great fostering ground for inclusion, to get people to think differently ... They may have had stereotypical ideas about other people and now they've … met a guy in their group who says he's gay or somebody from Somalia, when previously they would have had kind of racist assumptions or whatever. So, I think that is great.

One further point of interest made by Jackie concerned the mirroring of the diversity within the student population with those in educator roles. She expressed a belief that staff aren't:

> reflective of the kind of diversity in the community ... I think we need to see that ... we need ... (teachers) from different places ... I can guarantee if we had a Traveller woman on staff ... Traveller women would be very happy to come up here to our centre.

The nature of the diversity in the settings represented a complex makeup of learners. This represented challenges for leaders in nurturing a vision of inclusion that accounted for the entire community, but also represented significant opportunities to foster key messages about respect, tolerance, and the celebration of difference.

Theme 3: Navigating the Wider Landscape

Participants were profoundly aware of the impact of reform on their efforts toward inclusion. They also reflected on more localised arrangements and the impact of resourcing, as well as ongoing efforts to balance the requirements of quality assurance with maximising inclusive learning experiences.

'Fit' and the Wider Landscape

Leaders explored where FET fits as a sector, where they fit as a provider, and the impact this can have on learner supports. Paul commented on how:

> for a long time, FE has been halfway between second level and third level and didn't know what it was…they have huge support in second level, and they have them at higher level. And then we are again, the Cinderella, you're in the middle. And once again, we don't have them (supports).

It was acknowledged that the sector is developing, but that "the support piece is still

not there" (Annette). Evidently the somewhat dispersed nature of FET makes support provision vastly different from other sectors, where "it's a bit more difficult when you're part of something kind of sprawling like ETB-A … and we are all struggling with how to do that" (Priya). Jackie also commented on a sense of disconnection:

> I do think there's a little bit of a disconnect within (our) ETB between...who's making policy and who's implementing it...I certainly would not feel that I'm at the table when decisions are being made ... I think that there are things that the Adult Education Service have done that have gone really unrecognised ... it can be a little bit disregarded. (Jackie)

The FET landscape is evidently in a state of flux, but for these leaders is challenging its traditional positioning as lesser in the wider system. However, this is not to say that their voices are fully accounted for in broader developments in the sector.

Funding and Resourcing

Some participants acknowledged that funding in FET is available e.g., through the Fund for Students with Disabilities, but there is a recognition that learners in certain settings cannot access same. Paul summarised this discrepancy where "you've got Youthreach services, you've got adult education services, you've got the training centre services, they don't get additional needs funding. There's a huge area for expansion there and how to improve the system". Moreover, despite the availability of funding for certain support personnel e.g., Personal Assistants and interpreters, participants commented on recruitment challenges and procurement. Annette directly attributed this to "things like the rate of pay is so poor" and difficulties in "putting in place the mechanisms to draw the funding down" (Annette). Making a direct comparison to other sectors, participants referred to staffing

problems which “can be a bit difficult” (Priya), and unlike higher and post-primary, specific staff members aren’t consistently assigned to roles in inclusion and support. Annette highlighted how they “don’t have a Disability Officer, we don’t have people within our ETB that are driving, that are there to support colleges or centres”, and while funding for physical supports such as technology can be accessed, good will is at the heart of educators’ implementation of inclusive supports. Claire asserted that “this should be a full-time job for somebody” and if she could “wave a magic wand, I do think...that the prison service could have Inclusion and Diversity Officers, and things like that”. For some participants, maintaining the physical environment so as to maximise inclusive experiences has also proven problematic. Jackie referred to the importance of the built environment being a student friendly, inclusive space, but highlighted that there are:

> always problems with kind of money to do up buildings... but I think there’s huge work that could be done there. Because it’s where you’re kind of saying to people … that you put them in a grotty old room somewhere, you know you’re kind of saying something about what you think of them or how important you think they are.

Overall, logistical difficulties persist for inclusionary leaders, as they navigate complexities around resource allocation, infrastructural supports, and accessing key personnel in the wider system.

Balancing Wider Expectations and the Learner Experience

The participants reflected on the changing status of the sector in relation to the potential dichotomy between quality assurance and productivity, and the learner experience.

In the context of prison-based education, Claire saw greater value in offering "philosophy or the critical thinking classes" rather than programmes focused on "exams and accreditation". This broader perspective was reflected in the wider narratives, as the leaders recognised the societal impact of education and the key role of FET:

> There needs to be more of a recognition of the benefits of education and not just about getting a job or not just about progression onto the next steps of the ladder but there's actually the social benefits…and then lots of other benefits to people just engaging in educational activity... it can have huge knock-on effect in their families and the communities. (Jackie)

There is a sense of pride in these benefits as "you look at how much that learning has given them an advantage you think we were part of that success" (Annette). There is a therefore a growing awareness of how being part of a diverse learner population provides opportunities for the learners themselves to be more understanding, and inclusive and how this contributes to a more socially just and tolerant society. Claire highlighted the positive impact of this:

> It's very encouraging. And I do have a lot of hope for the future, and I do think things are changing … because culturally things are so much better with young people, with the kids these days, but the 20-year-olds are so 'woke' for want of a better word or whatever … I think society, in general, is going to look better in 10 years' time for people who might feel marginalised or excluded at the moment.

The leaders therefore highlighted the need for a careful balance between learner-centred inclusive settings and any sectoral expectations around quality and productivity.

Discussion

The discussion unpacks the themes in light of the wider literature. In doing so it further contextualises the leaders' conceptualisation of inclusion and the implications of their interpretation of this complex concept. It also explores inclusive practices evident in the themes, for both leaders and the educators in their respective settings and elaborates on the role of CPD as a key support in inclusionary leadership. Finally, it discusses inclusionary leadership in the context of the wider literature, and how the themes illuminate the experience of this group of rarely heard leaders.

Conceptualisations and Implications of Inclusion and Diversity

In keeping with the broader literature, the participants in this study demonstrated a vision of inclusion that was far-reaching and embracing of all in the FET community (Florian & Spratt, 2013). They did however articulate their journey from confined notions around learners with disabilities toward something more akin to a social-contextual or human-rights perspective. Some linked this shift to engagement in professional learning or ongoing experience with increasing diversity in the learner population. The impact of experience has been discussed elsewhere where educators can be surprised by knowing "more than they thought" with regard to meeting the needs of diverse learner populations, suggesting that "just by doing it", they may prove themselves "capable of developing knowledge and positive attitudes to inclusion" (Rouse, 2006, p. 12). The influence of personal experience on their vision for inclusion was also evident in some of the participants' narratives and is a common feature in the wider literature. There is evidence that those who have personal connections to groups at risk of marginalisation are more likely to have more positive attitudes toward inclusion and a higher degree of self-efficacy (Kunz et al., 2021).

Despite envisaging inclusion as all-encompassing, the participants did refer to specific groups in need of interventions and targeted supports. The broader literature on FET has indicated how the learner population can present with often fractured learner identities, where past experience and sometimes uncertain futures can result in self-doubt as they navigate a transitional no-man's land (O'Donnell et al., 2018). The leaders in this study acknowledged the challenge in including such diverse populations and appeared to approach such provision with the capacity to problem-solve and learn from potential mistakes, thereby "going through the trial-and-error process with teachers as partners and sharing frustrations" (Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013, p. 1523). Some leaders did however highlight the significant needs of those from ethnic minorities, those facing socio-economic disadvantage and homelessness, mature students, learners experiencing mental health difficulties, and those with past and current substance misuse issues. Their concerns echo some wider Irish research around at-risk groups in FET, and the challenges experienced by leaders and educators as they attempt to create settings characterised by active inclusion, that nurture positive transitions and a sense of belonging (ETBI, 2021). While acknowledging the challenges offered by the increasing diversity in the sector, the participants in this study heralded this as a positive development, particularly where learners would be confronted by groups and individuals that might challenge preconceptions and assumptions. Their claim that this can result in more inclusive and tolerant learning spaces, and indeed societies, is of course a common trait in the wider inclusive education literature.

Inclusive Practice(s)

The leaders demonstrated a commitment to inclusive provision both in terms of their own leadership, and a resolute belief in the wider practices in their settings. Some highlighted their attempts to model inclusive practice echoing research completed elsewhere, as leaders who

successfully nurture inclusive cultures actively model through “attitude, language and actions” (Sider et al., 2021, p. 237). One point of interest however is, in spite of an assuredness of educators’ commitment, the visibility of inclusive practice was problematic. The leaders in this project were not always clear on how specific educators were cultivating inclusivity in their respective classrooms. Some rationalised this in terms of ‘trusting’ educators to ‘do their best’ in line with the inclusive vision of the setting. The centrality of ‘trust’ here as a marker for healthy and productive relationships and the cultivation of inclusive cultures is of course well documented (Coviello & DeMatthews, 2021). However, some leaders also linked this lack of visibility to limited direct involvement in, or observation of, teaching and learning. The latter can be contentious with a range of authors offering evidence for and against the practice as part of the leaders’ role (Garza et al., 2016). Moreover, observation of teachers in the Irish education landscape, irrespective of sector, is not a routine practice, potentially due to the “culture, managerial resistance and the prevalence of observation during (teacher) training and (inspectoral) school reviews” (Walker et al., 2022, p. 50). Of course, this is not to say that leaders need only rely on informal or formal observation to gain an accurate picture of inclusive pedagogy in their settings. Matthews and Lewis (2009) refer to other avenues here, including “generating of dialogue about teaching and learning (and) setting expectations for high achievement and thinking about how learning could be improved” (p. 23).

Further measures include the use of data by both teachers and leaders in making sense of learners’ progress and the allocation of resources. The participants in this study did reference dialogue with peers as informing the development of their vision of inclusion, but its critical nature, or focus on teaching, learning and assessment, is unclear from the narratives. Moreover,

while resource allocation was a feature within the transcripts, the use of data in informing decisions around inclusive provision was also unclear.

Professional Learning for Inclusion

For the leaders in this study, a key element in realising their vision for inclusion involved capitalising on opportunities for professional learning. The impact of meaningful CPD in cultivating inclusive cultures is of course well documented in the literature. However, wider research indicates a preoccupation with 'ability' in CPD interventions that focus on inclusive practice, with an emphasis on special educational needs and disability (Makopoulou at al., 2022). In keeping with their broad understandings of inclusion, the leaders in this study referenced both CPD that focused on interventions that supported them in meeting the needs of students with disabilities, and learners from other 'at risk' groups. However, while there were some references to more diverse forms of professional learning e.g., peer learning, the general form of CPD was offered by external organisations and individuals providing workshops on successful inclusion. Fostering relationships with external partners and the building of capacity through professional learning is reported as characteristic of leadership for inclusion (McMillan, 2020). However, a range of authors have criticised any over-reliance on this form of CPD as failing to successfully impact educator practices or learner outcomes (Gulamhussein, 2013), indicating a preference amongst teachers, and evidence of greater overall benefits from teacher-led forms for example, "peer observation, professional discussion, and even informal networking" (El-Deghaidy et al., 2015, p. 1580).

The reference here to observation is problematic in the Irish context, as discussed, and while there is ample evidence that professional dialogue can prove vital in meaningful CPD (Rose & Reynolds, 2006), it can also prove challenging in terms of culture, resourcing, and

authenticity (Timperley, 2015). As above, while the leaders in this study did comment on dialogue, the criticality and focus of same remains questionable. There is however a point of note where some leaders referenced challenging conversations with colleagues around effective inclusion for particular learners. The presence of these 'difficult conversations' are evidently key to healthy inclusive cultures, where positive working relationships with staff are underpinned by trust. In cultivating such relationships, leaders can then "present themselves as coming from a place of care when difficult conversations about practice [around inclusion] are necessary" (MacCormack et al., 2021, p. 13). Finally, with regard to CPD, it is noteworthy that some of the participants in this study highlighted the lack of targeted professional learning for leaders, more broadly and in terms of leadership for inclusion. Evidence suggests that leaders in Irish FET settings experience somewhat informal CPD processes (CEDEFOP, 2011), and while there is an absence of research exploring the professional learning needs of leaders with regard to inclusion in the Irish context, studies completed elsewhere recommend ongoing inclusion specific CPD (Crockett et al., 2009).

Models of Inclusionary Leadership

In keeping with broader work on the shifting and highly contextualised nature of leadership, the participants in this study did not prescribe to any single model or style of leadership (Lumby & Tomlinson, 2000). The narratives do however offer common characteristics, particularly a reflective stance, where they openly acknowledged that experimentation and error were part of their journey in leading inclusion, and a resolute commitment to learners' needs and to the influential positioning of their setting in wider communities. There is therefore a clear values-based premise amongst the leaders in this study, where their far-reaching vision of inclusion acknowledges the challenges experienced by many

of their learners in their transition to, and ongoing journey within FET, and indeed their lives beyond the education setting (Szeto, 2020). In attending to better social and academic outcomes for the learners the leaders also demonstrate a transformational tendency (Romanuck Murphy, 2018), but this is perhaps weakened by the aforementioned lack of visibility around inclusive practice. While they might nurture agency and efficacy on the part of teachers (Precey et al., 2013), their inability to readily articulate how inclusive pedagogy is actuated in their settings raises questions about the intentionality of this approach i.e., on what basis has their evident trust of educators to cultivate inclusive teaching and learning environments formed? Is this evidence-based, intuitive, or perhaps the result of long-held traditions across the sector around teacher autonomy and accountability? This position can also lead us to conclude that leaders in such settings may not have a consistently instructional dimension, where they are actively involved in setting-wide instructional practices and reform (Yu, 2009). There is of course some evidence of their contribution to the development of teaching and learning practices via, for example the introduction of CPD or particular interventions, but again, the inability to account for how these are then manifested in teachers' daily practices demonstrates a somewhat inconsistent approach.

All of the leaders depicted their role as managerial and/or administrative to some extent. This echoes research elsewhere, as leadership for inclusion always necessitates some functional aspect around structural or statutory obligations (Morrissey, 2021). Their commentary here generally focused on resourcing and the acquiring of supports for students with additional needs, which again represents a somewhat dichotomous stance, that is, where they view inclusion as far-reaching beyond disability etc., but acknowledge that 'sanctioned' supports target this particular group. Such a position might lead us to conclude that those bodies responsible for resourcing in FET have a particular conceptualisation of inclusion, which in keeping with

traditionalist tendencies focuses on learners with identifiable special educational needs. A further point of contestation concerns the funding for such supports, where leaders referenced substantial financial aid, but in tandem highlighted administrative issues in accessing funds and ongoing problems with utilising these for resourcing purposes. The first point here represents a direct contrast to reports in wider research where financial support that contributes to fostering inclusive settings can prove insufficient (Pearce et al., 2010). With regard to resourcing, and specifically the recruitment of support personnel, there is clear evidence of ongoing difficulties as these positions can offer poor pay and conditions (Kerry & Kerry, 2003). When commenting on the latter, leaders also highlighted the absence of certain roles in FET, specifically disability officers, psychological support personnel, individuals who support with assistive technology, and dedicated professional learning teams that support inclusive provision. This is in stark contrast to post-primary and higher education sectors, where some of these positions are inherent in existing structures (Zorec et al., 2022).

Leading Inclusion in FET

The comparative nature of the above commentary, where FET is juxtaposed with other sectors, is a common trait in wider literature (Ozga & Deem, 2000). In some cases, FET is presented as markedly different, in learner population and approach to provision as learners may be characterised as ‘non-traditional’ (Grummell & Murray, 2015), while elsewhere it is perceived as of lower status or the second-best option to higher education (McGuinness et al., 2014). However, despite their acknowledgement of the lack of consistency across settings regarding supports for inclusive provision, the leaders in this study were clear that they felt that FET had turned a corner with regard to its status. They depicted a sector that was receiving renewed attention as a viable and meaningful pathway for a diverse population of learners, and

where they felt their respective FET settings were making a tangible impact on the lives of learners, and their wider communities. This contrasts with any depiction of FET as preoccupied solely with economic drivers and echoes other Irish literature where the sector is seen as key to enhanced social participation and inclusion in communities (O'Leary & Rami, 2017). In the case of this study, the contribution of FET to prison-based education, and its role in training education for certain groups deserves particular attention. Leaders in these settings made it clear that the sector was offering their learners a pathway that could fundamentally alter their lives, changing not only their skillset but their identity and worldview (Illeris, 2014). Positive identity development, where learners are supported in asking and answering key questions about who they are and what they want from the learning experience can prove key to effective inclusion, with some authors encouraging leaders to take an active role in identity development practices (DeMatthews & Mueller, 2022). However, while acknowledging that policy reform and governance processes are attempting to raise the status of FET, some leaders called for greater inclusion of their voices in future restructuring, while also expressing concern around the ultimate success of any reform due to the kaleidoscopic nature of the overall sector. Such calls are common in FET, where there is a recognition that its somewhat fragmented identity has been borne out of historical attempts to meet the varying demands of government departments (Grummell & Murray, 2015). At a systemic level there is however a recognition of the need for greater collaboration and cohesion across settings, and more consistency in the learner experience (Solas, 2020). The concern of course, as highlighted by some of the participants in this study, is that in unifying the sector, the very nuanced characteristics that make it so readily attractive, accessible, and inclusive, may be impacted.

Limitations

The sample size is perhaps the most significant limitation in this study. However, a small sample size is in keeping with broader qualitative inquiry that seeks to engage in in-depth analysis of information-rich accounts (Shaheen & Pradhan, 2019) thereby facilitating the "unfolding of a new and richly textured understanding of the phenomena under study" (Vasileiou et al., 2018, p. 2). Given the dearth of literature on leadership for inclusion in FET this focus on the richness of the participants' narratives was key in this exploratory study. While it is a strength of the study that the participants offered perspectives from diverse settings, a further limitation concerned the absence of those from certain parts of the sector, for example, Youthreach. Given the significant number of learners attending the latter (Solas, 2023) and evidence that nurturing inclusive environments is a key priority in Youthreach as an "alternative" setting (Cahill et al., 2020), it is plausible that a leader from such settings would have added to the richness of the narratives. Further research might therefore include such voices.

Conclusion

The leaders in this study demonstrate a fervent commitment to inclusivity in their settings and a profound awareness of the role FET plays in supporting diverse populations of learners in forging new pathways and constructing renewed learner identities. Furthermore, while recognising FET's positioning as somewhat lesser in recent decades in comparison to neighbouring sectors, the leaders here hold significant hope for the future of FET, its evident capacity for authentic inclusion, and potential to make a profound impact on communities and broader society. However, a lack of clarity on how inclusivity is manifested in the daily practices of educators persists, and while professional learning plays a key role, its implementation remains inconsistent. In attempting to retain their dedication to inclusion and address these

potential shortfalls, the sector might consider a multidimensional framework to guide inclusionary leadership. This could utilise Morrissey's (2021) triadic model which focuses on values-based leadership, managerial leadership, and teacher leadership. The evidence from this study would suggest that inclusive values are at the core of the work of these leaders, and similarly, that even amidst somewhat complex and evolving conditions, they are making significant efforts at dealing with the administrative and often resource-heavy aspect of inclusionary leadership. Teacher leadership does however require further attention, particularly around leaders' contributions to instruction, reflective dialogue on teaching and learning, and effective inclusive pedagogy. Enhancing this aspect of the triad could greatly benefit their future development as inclusionary leaders. Moreover, a further element could be added here so as to take account of the leaders' positioning within the dynamic FET landscape and the evident lack of influence they feel around its direction. Hence, in tandem with the values-based, teacher, and managerial dimensions, capitalising on their capacity for impactful systemic leadership could be harnessed to a greater degree. This would ensure that FET leaders feel that their voice is included in wider sectoral reform, both around effective inclusion, and indeed, other key areas of policy and practice. This study demonstrates that they have much to offer, hence drawing on their passion and vision could potentially enrich the future trajectory of the sector.

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Biography

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