

The ego development stage of school leaders in England and its implication for practice

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Structure

- Rationale
- Methodology
- Emerging Findings
- Moving Forward

Ego Development Theory

- A pattern – clusters of perceptions, cognitions, feelings and other forces (Hauser 1993)
- Westenberg, Blasi and Cohn (1998) describe ego as a “comprehensive and in-depth account of personality
- Initially organised as a hierarchal, linear structure of 8 stages , progressing through these stages can be associated with
 - Changes in conscious preoccupations
 - Changes in interpersonal style,
 - Changes in conception of complexity
 - Enhanced capacity to self-regulate (Manners et al. 2004, Hy and Loevinger 1998).

Why use AED to explore head teachers?

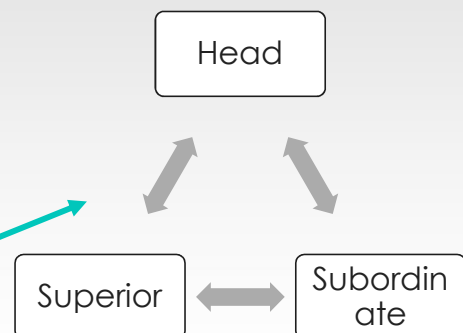
- 1: AED theory recognises dynamic nature of human interaction
2. An excellent model for exploring the complex nature of leadership in schools
- 3: Provides a model for exploring head teacher development

Gaps in literature aligned to research aims

<p>Use of such constructs within education leadership is limited</p> <p>Leadership research stuck within a linear paradigm.</p>	<p>Exploring ego development of the head teacher in order to see how different ego stages can</p> <p>a) how head teacher navigate the complex environment that is a school</p> <p>b) Influence how the head teacher is experienced by others</p>
<p>Predictive validity of behaviour/the "so what" factor</p>	<p><i>Developing a methodology for exploring typical thoughts, feelings and behaviours within given ego stages in schools.</i></p>

Methodology

- 5 headteachers within UK public sector schools, recruited via social media.
 - 2 male, 3 female; 3 primary, 2 secondary
- Assessed through WUSCT (Hy and Loevinger 1998).
 - Assessment followed strict protocols and training methods outlined within manual.
 - 0.85 agreement
- Critical Incident Interview



Critical Incidents

Task

The head teacher, subordinate and superior was asked to describe one event over the **last 3 months**.

The incident did not have to be particularly explosive.

However, I did ask that they selected an event that best reflected how they think, felt and behaved as a head teacher on a daily basis.



Analysis

Put together a pre-determined coding procedure inspired by:

PLI (Brinkmann and Kvale 2014)
Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014)

Stage 1

Theming the data looking for Manifest Themes, using specific coding strategies to target

Action
Direct
observation

Emotion
Intrapersonal
Interpersonal

Process
Simple: Direct
observation
Conceptual:
internal

Plus in-
vivo
coding

Stage 2: Comparing Between Incidents

- Generate themes from the three individual incidents
- Compare the three incidents for similarity.
- Organising into thoughts, feelings and behaviours

Stage 3: Theme Testing

Data and Participant

Theme Rules

- For a theme to be included in description of each ego stage...
 - Reference made within each relevant case study
 - Within each case study, a code within the interview OR memo which belonged to the relevant theme was made in all three interviews within that case study.

Results

- 1 case study at E5 – Self Aware
- 2 case studies at E6 – Conscientious
- 2 case studies at E7 – Individualistic

Cross Themes – How They Interacted

COMPLEXITY Increasingly wider discussion of influencing factors within the incident

NARROW: What I deem important in driving action

Greater mention of external influencers driving their action.

WIDE What is important for the organisation – internal and external

Greater reference to how they made the decision

Self Aware

Consci

Individualist

Interaction with Others Values

My values and beliefs.
Judgement of others values.

H/T values were school values

- interchange 'ours' with 'mine.
- Others values must align to school/mine.

Digging deeper – when they disagree. What's behind those values,

Values of school were co-constructed.

Leverage/Manipulation

Reactionary manipulation of others

Pre-planning to secure desired, pre-determined outcomes

How can I influence them – "what makes them tick/situation"

Self Aware

Consci

Individualist

Cross Themes – How They Were Experienced

Effective by why they did/are

The leader is
“effective”;
action focused

Leader
Qualities –
listens,
empathetic

Effective by how
they made me
feel

“I want to be this
person” –
emotional
connection –
love, empathy.

Self Aware

Consci

Individualist

Summary

- Emerging patterns with distinct differences in how different ego stages interact with their environment,
 - Perception of Complexity
 - Purpose and use of collaboration
 - Interaction with others' values
 - Leverage and manipulation
- Emerging patterns with environment perceiving different ego stages
 - Differences in priorities of action over process
 - Greater degree of emotional connect/reasonancy

A Question That Is Needing Further Development...

- Development of a methodology that could robustly collect the typical thoughts, feelings and behaviours of individual within a given ego stage.

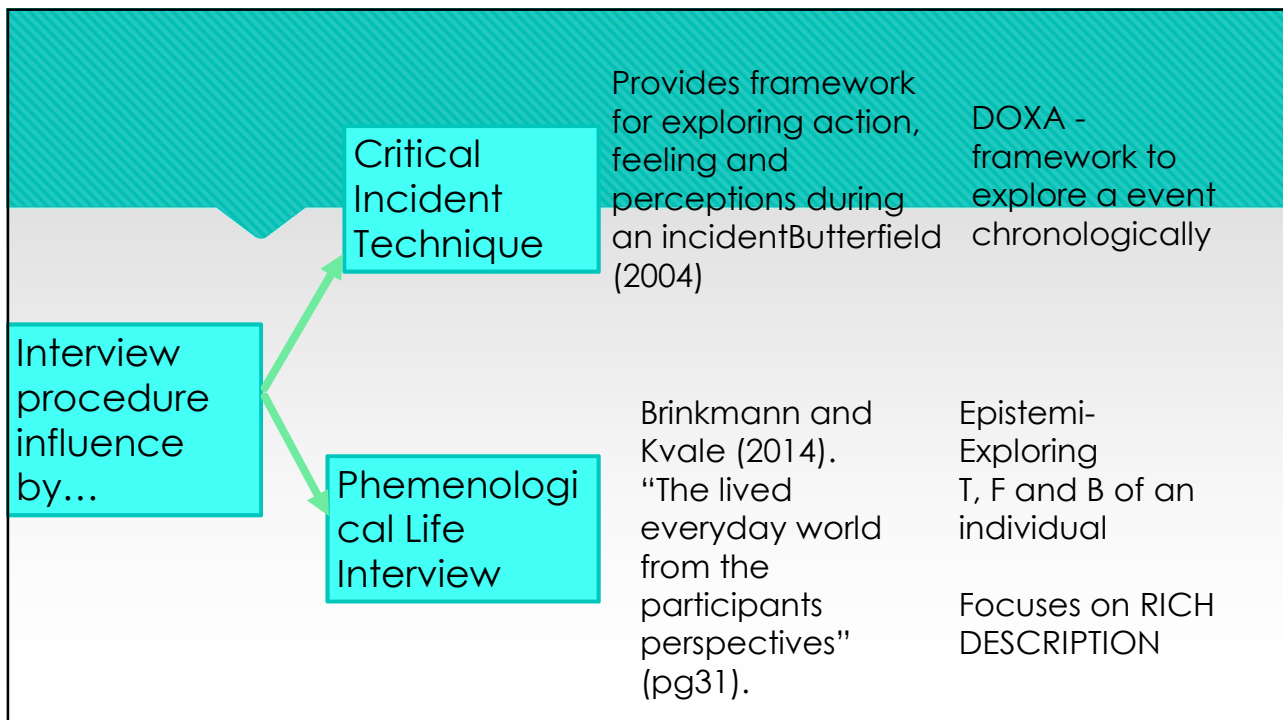
Attempts to Overcome Methodological Issues

- How can you capture what actually happened and not someone's interpretation?

Combined CIT
with PLI

- How can we collect feelings, thoughts and behaviour?
- How do we collect the incident as an observation?
- How do we collect feelings of head teacher and participant when we can only capture emotion?

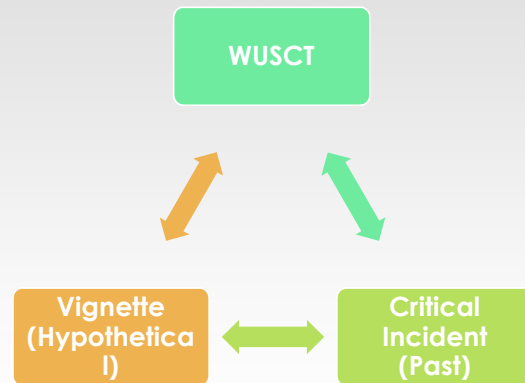
Interview
design



Strengths to Method	Caveat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Triangulation allowed me check and only include common patterns across individual cases ○ Collecting thoughts, feelings and behaviours separately, building a whole case profile ○ Beginning to see how the head-teacher navigates and interacts with their context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Despite triangulation, number of issues with utilising CIT to collect this data on its own <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recall ○ Coding across three different incidents ○ Not anonymous – difficult to code the interviews should I know the individual ○ Context specific reaction?

Future Development

- Refinement based on feedback from headteachers
- Vignette Development (Finch 1987)
 - Acknowledge issues with CITs
 - Developing a set of stories so as heads to react to
 - Coded alongside CIT – triangulation; confirming themes.



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- Development of a methodology that could robustly collect the typical thoughts, feelings and behaviours of individual within a given ego stage.

Supporting Slides

Table 2
Characteristics of Stages of Ego Development in Loevinger's Model

Ego stage	Impulse control	Interpersonal style	Conscious preoccupations	Cognitive style
Impulsive (2)	Impulsive, afraid of retaliation	Dependent, egocentric, exploitative	Bodily feelings	Stereotyping, conceptual confusion
Self-protective (3)	Opportunistic, afraid of being caught	Wary, manipulative, exploitative	Self-protection, trouble, advantage, control	See above
Conformist (4)	Conformity to rules, shame	Cooperative, loyal, superficial niceness	Appearance, social acceptability, behavior	Conceptual simplicity, clichés
Self-aware (5)	Differentiation of norms, exceptions allowable	Helpful, aware of self in relation to group	Feelings, problems, adjustment	Multiplicity
Conscientious (6)	Self-evaluated standards, self-criticism	Intense, responsible	Differentiated feelings, motives, achievements	Conceptual complexity, idea of patterning
Individualistic (7)	Tolerance, respect for individuality	Mutuality, dependence as an emotional problem	Individuality, development, roles	Distinction of process and outcome
Autonomous (8)	Coping with conflict	Interdependence, respect for autonomy	Self-fulfillment, psychological causation	Increased conceptual complexity, broad scope, toleration of ambiguity
Integrated (9)	Reconciliation of inner conflict	Cherishing of individuality	Identity	

Note. From the following two sources: *Measuring Ego Development* (p. 4), by L. Hy and J. Loevinger, 1996, Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. Copyright 1996 by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. Adapted with permission, and *Ego development: Conceptions and theories* (pp. 24–25), by J. Loevinger, 1976, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Copyright 1976 by Jossey-Bass. Adapted with permission.

Addressing Potential Methodological Issues

Concerns	Solutions within Interview Design
<p>How can you capture what actually happened and not someone's interpretation?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prompts within question to focus on what they <i>observed</i> e.g. "What did you see happening" • Challenging individuals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When they are slipping into explaining • When language or body language suggests they are not sure. • Seeking Clarification: "you say you think he was thinking that, what gave you that impression, was this ever explicit?" • Within introduction and throughout questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explaining the goal is collect description and explanations of the behaviour • Limited timeframe avoided "over-cognification"

Concerns	Solutions within Interview Design
How can we collect feelings, thoughts and behaviour?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview structured – separated the behaviour, thoughts and feelings communicated/expressed.
How do we collect the incident as an observation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start with an introduction to the incident. • Speaking to the interviewee prior to interview has been shown to prompt effective recall (Edvarrson 2001) • Only incident three months prior to the interview • Following an ABC interview model – Before, During and Reflection.

Concerns	Solutions within Interview Design
<p>How do we collect feelings of head teacher and participant when we can only capture emotion?</p> <p>(See James and Crawford 2015)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on what was communicated by the head-teacher, as oppose to how it was communicated. • Acknowledge limitations (if only we can read their mind)