Effective Support Mechanisms for those in the Formative Stages of Middle Leadership: A Case Study in the Secondary Independent Education Sector

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Abstract.

This dissertation presents a study into the professional world of newly and recently appointed middle leaders in an independent school in the North West of England, and sheds light on two areas of educational leadership which are lacking in empirical study. First, it gives a thick description of the role of middle leaders in an independent school, and second it focuses on the transitional stage as teachers take on a leadership role within the school for the first time. It identifies the challenges that middle leaders in this specific context face and, through engaging with published research from around the world, suggests procedures that could help such leaders as they make the transition from leading and managing children to leading and managing their peers. Middle leaders in the school are those who have responsibility over other teachers, but who are not part of the senior leadership team, and include heads of department, heads of year and heads of extra-curricular activities, and many quickly discover that, beyond a title, an increase in salary and perhaps an office, there is no formal, organised or structured support offered, even though they may well be taking on the leadership and management of adults for the first time. A study of contemporary literature in both the educational and wider leadership fields leads to the drawing up of a series of interrelated propositions upon which an interview schedule is built. Coding of the data drawn from the interviews reveals a wide range of factors that surround the middle leaders involved in the case, and whilst many of these factors appear to resonate with generally held views on leadership, some appear to be context specific to the school within which the study is based. Closer interrogation of the data shows that there are a number of factors that interface with the role of middle leader, some of which are challenging whilst others are enabling. The recommendations that arise from the study are built on the assertion that middle leadership within the school requires capabilities that are different to those of the classroom teacher, and which take time to acquire. These capabilities can be identified and thus can be taught or developed through a leadership development programme. From this follows the recommendation that schools should ensure that a programme of leadership development is in place, both for staff aspiring to such roles, and for staff recently appointed and models of suitable programmes, based on the study, are presented.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1:1 Background to the study

The school in which the study is based is an all-boys independent school situated in a suburban area in the North West of England, approximately five miles from the centre of a major city. It is one of a family of four schools, all within close proximity of each other and consisting of two junior schools and two senior schools (boys and girls). The Boys' School has been established for almost four hundred years, and has a reputation at local, regional and national level for academic success, along with a rich extra-curricular tradition that includes sport, music and drama. The senior school is selective with boys taking an entrance exam in the January of Y6. Most boys commute to and from the site by a system of school buses. Staffing within the school has been historically very stable. Whilst there is the 'churn' of Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) leaving for pastures new or promotion after two to five years, a significant proportion of the staff are of local descent and, because there is no other comparable independent school within reasonable commuting distance, many have settled down and established their career there. The demographic of the school teaching staff is such that there was a big influx of new staff in the mid-1980s which meant that, after a long period which saw relatively little staff turnover, there has been a very significant change over the past ten years as the previous cohort has retired. This, combined with the turnover of the younger teachers, means that the staff is quite a different mix to that of even five years ago, and this churn has meant that a significant number of staff have been promoted to middle leadership roles within recent years, some from within the school, others from outside, and so have found themselves taking on a role which involves the leading of adults for the first time. Whilst the Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) were given a full programme of support during their first year in post, the researcher identified a gap in the support given to middle leaders, particularly on first being appointed, and decided to use the opportunity of a doctorate in this area. Little did he realise as he set out on his journey that he would pick two 'blind spots' in the research, that of leadership within the independent education sector where there is no previous empirical study (Harvey, 2007 and Harvey, 2015), and that of middle leadership in the wider educational context where the research corpus is small (Thorpe and Bennett-Powell, 2014).

1:2 The researcher's position within the study

The researcher teaches within the school in which the study has been conducted, and has done for more than thirty years. During most of that time he has been a head of department (Design and Technology), and has held other middle leadership roles (Head of Rowing, Head of the Combined Cadet Force), however approximately eight years ago he was appointed to the post of Staff Development Coordinator, and with this came the role of Induction Tutor for NQTs. Whilst there is neither the space nor the need to elaborate on the NQT induction process here, suffice to say that, as a statutory process and one which is open to vigorous inspection, the process affording the new teacher access to significant resource in the way of a structured, organised programme of mentoring, introduction to school processes, lesson observation feedbacks, along with clear protocols as to how to deal with issues should they arise. In comparison, the researcher observed that, on their appointment, the new middle leader within the school received a raw deal in that the level of formal support offered was negligible; there appeared to be an assumption that, because they were a sound classroom teacher, they would readily make the transfer across to a departmental leadership role. For the researcher, this appeared to be an area ripe for doctoral level research, and it gave him the opportunity to be an insider researcher a place that, whilst it may have the drawback of a perceived lack of objectivity, has the distinct advantage of enabling him to undertake a piece of work with the potential for rich description due to the fact that he knows well both the organisation and the people within it. The researcher also has significant experience of leadership in areas beyond the school gates. He has held (and continues to hold) a senior leadership post in the Army Cadet Force, and has for some years been a Churchwarden in his parish church, including a twelve-month interregnum. These amongst other examples help demonstrate the researcher's position in the study; not only does he know the context and the participants well, but he has a rich and varied personal experience of leadership.

1:3 Aim of the study

Before the researcher embarked on this study, he had long been aware that the support offered to newly appointed middle leaders in the school was significantly less than that which was offered to NQTs. He observed that middle leaders were neither formally prepared for their new role, nor supported once in it, and so the purpose of the study was to inform and illuminate the situation as it currently stood in order to see what the specific

issues of these newly appointed middle leaders were. At the outset, the researcher was unsure of what he would find, how long it would take to find it, or what he could do with the evidence once he had acquired it. Whilst the researcher was keen that the results of the study would give him useable knowledge, he didn't know whether this would be in a set of recommendations that he could subsequently work on outside the parameters of the study, or whether it would lead to a piece of action research within the confines of the doctorate. Thus, the initial aim of the study was to attempt to find out the issues facing newly appointed middle leaders within the context of an independent school through primary research. It would be from the results of the findings of this piece of research that the researcher could consider producing a series of proposals to help them as they go through this transitional stage in their career.

1:4 The research question

On embarking upon this study, considerable thought and care was given to the wording of the research question:

Can effective support mechanisms be identified for those in the formative stages of middle leadership in the secondary independent education sector?

This research question encapsulated the study for the full duration of the project: It is a case study which is based in an independent school at secondary level; It is concerned with those teachers who have been promoted to middle leadership; It focuses particularly on the transitional stage from classroom teacher to middle leader, and on the support that they need at that stage. The research question proved to be a rock-solid point of reference throughout the study, and the researcher referred back to it on a regular basis. If he was unsure as to whether a piece of data or a literature reference was relevant, the researcher set it against the question as a benchmark and found over time that it helped give a consistency and cogency to the whole work. In the early stages of the study, it was the clarity of the research question that helped provide the parameters for the literature review.

1:5 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for this study was derived from an analysis of a range of key literature on the topic. This aspect of the research programme proved to be both interesting and challenging. Interesting because there is a wealth of resource about

'leadership' available, but challenging because, no matter how hard the researcher looked, he could find little research that had been undertaken in the area of middle leadership, less still on middle leadership in the context of education, and virtually none on the transitional period when teachers are taking their first tentative steps in a leadership role. Much of the literature is focussed on senior leadership, and some is based in Higher Education contexts, and therefore is tangential to the researcher's own focus of study. Thus, the literature review begins by taking an overview of leadership from a number of angles, and includes a short discussion on our understanding of the differences between leadership and management. It looks at the competencies that different researchers have identified as being desirable of leaders, and considers the places of authority and influence respectively in the power that leaders are able to exercise. The review then turns to vision, not only its perceived importance in leadership, but also the difficulties we have in defining it or knowing how to teach people to develop it.

The chapter next moves from general principles, and homes in on those more specific to the study, looking in turn at the school context, the distribution of leadership, and the positioning of the middle leader within the organisation. It then considers some of the challenges and complexities that leaders face in their role. Consideration is given to the moral imperative of training school leaders, with the role of leadership being set apart from that of classroom teaching. The fundamental question 'Can leadership be taught?' is asked and investigated through the literature, along with the requirements of development programmes. A range of models of leadership development models are explored, looking at commonalities between them, and finally a review of the challenges to the evaluation of these programmes is presented. Throughout this part of the study, the researcher set the bounds of the literature against the research question. This not only allowed him to keep the review pertinent and provide a coherence, but it also enabled him to critically analyse the literature against a particular standpoint. One of the key purposes of the literature review was to provide a conceptual framework which would inform the data gathering that was to follow. In order to provide an auditable line of research from the research question through the literature and on to the interview schedule, the researcher constructed a series of five interlinked propositions thus: Middle leadership is important to the school; There are specific capabilities required by middle leaders; These capabilities are not the same as those needed by classroom teachers; A development programme has the potential to

enhance those capabilities; Such enhancement is of benefit to the learners in the school. These propositions or 'temporary conceptual tools' (Thomas, 2011) are described and explained fully towards the end of the literature section of the study.

1:6 Research approach

A number of aspects of the research programme were considered during the early stages of the project, in particular the parameters of the study cohort. For some time, the researcher was keen on taking a broad approach, taking the study into a range of schools, to contexts outside the school, and possibly further still into youth organisations. However, as the programme progressed, the study steadily focussed in on the one school, and did so for two reasons. First, there was the challenge of finding a range of schools to gain access to, and selecting a rationale for selecting the schools which was more objective than simply the fact that the researcher knew somebody who worked within them. Second, it became apparent over time that there was enough data to be gleaned from a single case, and this corpus of knowledge would give the study a body that would be narrow and deep rather than one that was broad and shallow. This the researcher came to see as advantageous because whilst narrow, the depth of the study had the potential to set a benchmark against which other, different contexts could be set.

Over a period of 22 months, 25 of staff at the school were interviewed. The researcher knew each of the participants, some being close friends, and this is important for the reader to note because there are both disadvantages and advantages to being so closely involved in the case. Whilst it can be argued (and it is accepted by the researcher) that objectivity is compromised, being an insider researcher gives an access that would probably be denied to an independent observer because of the trust that the participants have in the researcher; they are more likely to be candid. This is a piece of qualitative work, and the conclusions that are drawn are those of the researcher, other researchers with different backgrounds may well see the picture differently, and this is accepted and acknowledged by the researcher. As the interview schedule unfolded, and the researcher had an increasingly clear understanding of the areas he wanted to focus on, he found that knowing the participants, and being trusted by them enabled him to dig quickly and deeply within the individual interviews. In essence, the researcher is of the view that they were willing to tell him things that they would not have told a stranger. To begin with, the researcher interviewed the Head teacher and his two Deputies in order to give a backdrop to the

subsequent interviews. From these three participants in the senior leadership team, the researcher looked to glean a picture or backdrop of the organisation's expectations of their middle leaders. From this, and using an interview schedule that was built around the propositions that had been constructed from the literature review, the interviewer then interviewed a number of middle leaders who were within the first 18 months of their appointment and, because of the level of turnover of staff in the years prior to the study commencing, this proved to be a cohort which was large enough to produce coherency in the findings. Arguably the researcher could have left the interview schedule at this group, however as he interviewed them he became increasingly aware that, because of their inexperience, such leaders 'don't know what they don't know', and so he made the decision to widen the interviewee cohort to those who have been middle leaders for longer than eighteen months. This proved to be a sound decision because not only did it transpire that these participants reported the same issues as those newly appointed but, importantly for the study, they also had a broader perspective on how the issues could be dealt with.

As the data was collected, and the researcher began to build up a thick description of the case, he decided to apply a process of constant comparative coding to the data to see whether any patterns or commonalities could be identified. The coding started once the fifth interview had been transcribed, and at the beginning of this process the researcher referenced each piece of data that emerged to one or more of the propositions. This not only gave a clear focus to start the coding, but it also gave reassurance that the propositions were fit for purpose because they were substantiated by the coding. From this early stage in the process, the coding had an ever-increasing influence on the direction of the interview questions because the responses given by individual participants informed the coding, and the coding informed the interviews. The coding thus became steadily more refined until, from the 25 interviews undertaken, some 750 items of relevant data were identified constituting 40 codes within 6 main themes.

This interrogation of the data brought to the researcher significant clarity to the picture of middle leadership within the case, however it also threw up a couple of surprises that he would not have predicted at the outset. The first of these was that it became apparent from the responses just how much of a challenge it is for the participants as they move from leading and managing children to leading and managing adults. It was clear that, whilst subject teachers have developed leadership and management skills within their classroom

practice, in no way did this prepare them for leading and managing their peers, and for some at least, the step change came as quite a shock. Second, whilst the researcher was specifically interested in the interviewees' experiences in their leading and managing of adults, it was observed that a number of the participants continued during interview to emphasise their professional relationships with pupils rather than exploring their role as a leader of colleagues. Having noted this particular point, the researcher re-coded all the transcripts, looking specifically for references to pupils, and recorded instances of three quarters of the participants talking about their pupils, some at considerable length. It is suggested by the researcher that this may be in part due to the 'flatness' of school structures; no leader moves far from the children. It may also indicate that, as a prime motivator for adults going in to teaching is to work with children, they are reluctant to distance themselves from this aspect of their work.

1:7 Development of a thesis

Much of the grouping of the data during the early stages of the coding process was concerned with contextual issues (i.e. describing various aspects of the school, the department, defining the middle leaders), however approximately three months into the coding process, the researcher had what Thornbeg and Charmaz (2011) term as an *Aha! Experience*. Whilst looking at the codes, and trying various ways in which to place them in order to produce a logical flow from which he could begin to construct a coherent narrative, the researcher spotted a pattern that a proportion of the codes readily fell into one of two categories: those factors that make the leading of a department difficult, and those factors that make it possible. These he labelled 'factors that challenge' and 'factors that enable'. On further interrogation of this coding, the researcher made a second observation which is that it appears to be the case that the factors that make leading a department a challenge lie largely outside the control of the leader, whilst those factors that make leadership possible appear to lie within the influence of the middle leader. It is the identification and codification of these two areas that lies at the heart of this study, and it is from these observations and deductions that the final conclusions of the study are drawn. Having made the case that leadership training and development are of significant importance, and undertaken a case study to establish some of the requirements of the newly appointed middle leader, the researcher returns to the literature in order to see how the requirements he has identified match the models that are currently used by different

providers. It is this analysis of both first principles and current practice, and the subsequent synthesis of them that leads him to make a series of proposals about the form of provision of leadership development for middle leaders in schools. Because the case has been set within one school, it is accepted that these proposals are not theoretically generalisable, however it is hoped that the research will lead the reader to apply the findings against their own experience in order that they may draw their own conclusions.

1:8 Statement of contribution

This study looks closely into two specific and clearly bounded areas of leadership which have been little researched, thus informing two distinct 'blank spots' (Gough, 2002) in the research picture. The first area is that of leadership within an independent school where, through a case study it provides a thick description of the lot of middle leaders in a single sex, selective independent secondary school, giving the reader an insight into this context. Research into this area is rare (Davies and Davies, 2014) with the empirical evidence on leadership within the independent sector being 'under-researched almost to the point of invisibility' (Harvey, 2007). This is arguably important from a research perspective because whilst the private sector in the UK educates some 7% of the school population in the UK, we are largely ignorant about the leadership and management that take place within the sector, indeed: *There is more in total about sex and sport than about leadership, management or governance!* (Harvey, 2015). Because there is such a paucity of data in this area, the researcher argues that it is deserving of special attention in order that an insight can be gained into the field, thus observers can gauge similarities and/or differences between this sector and other education sectors.

There are differences between the independent and state sectors that are clear and incontestable. Because fees are paid directly to the school, the stakeholders (most often the parents of the child attending) have very high expectations. The school is free to set its own curriculum, and teaching staff do not need a teaching qualification. The researcher's observation is that the churn of staff tends to be low because of the distances between schools means that teachers are less likely to move from school to school. He also notes that schools in the sector tend to be smaller than maintained schools, and so the management structures are generally flatter which, combined with low churn means that promotion progress can be very slow. Independent schools sell themselves on the 'all-round' education on offer, and so sport, drama and music are frequently high on the

school's profile, and for this reason there is a cultural expectation that teachers will offer extra-curricular activities over and above their classroom role. Whether this case shows that middle leadership within an independent school is significantly different to that of their colleagues in the maintained sector is for the reader to gauge, however as this will be the first empirical study into this area, the researcher contends that it will make a significant contribution to the discourse in educational leadership.

The second area in which this study contributes to the educational leadership knowledge corpus is that of middle leadership. This is also an area notable for the paucity of empirical study, a factor noted by Crowther (2009), Spillane et al. (1999) and more recently Thorpe and Bennett-Powell (2014). There remains a deeply-held view that leadership positions within a school can be taken on by good classroom teachers (OECD, 2008), yet there is also a growing awareness that the capabilities required for leadership are not the same as those needed for classroom teaching (Bush, 2011). The point at which classroom teachers take on their first leadership role and move from leading and managing children to leading and managing adults is a key one, particularly if they have no previous experience on which to draw. For many this can be a very significant challenge, yet it is just this transition point within the teaching career path at which we have very little research. It is in this area also that the thesis contributes to the research, for it not only reveals some of the particular challenges that newly and recently appointed middle leaders face, but it also draws on leadership development programmes from around the world to make suggestions as to how these challenges may be best addressed. The conclusions of this research draw on a case study to shed light on *what* recently appointed middle leaders require in the way of support, training and development, and combine this with a range of international models to suggest *how* these can be best achieved.

This thesis thus contributes to two specific 'blind spots' in the educational leadership discourse; that of leadership within the independent sector, and that of the transition into middle leadership.

1:9 Summary & schedule of activity

This research project has been undertaken by an insider researcher undertaking a case study into the transitional stage as classroom teachers are appointed to their first posts of leadership, looking into their needs and, on the basis of this empirical research, makes recommendations as to how they can be prepared and supported. The data was gathered

through semi-structured interviews of 25 participants over a 22-month period, and the subsequent coding produced approximately 750 items of data in 40 codes which were grouped into six themes. From this, a pattern emerged which showed that there were a number of identifiable factors that made the middle leader's role challenging, while there were also a number of identifiable factors that made it possible. From this analysis, the enabling factors were synthesised into forms of preparation and development that are common in leadership development, to produce a model of a proposed programme for aspiring and transitional middle leaders. The next chapter of the thesis looks into, and analyses a range of pertinent literature from a wide range of sources from which the researcher then develops his research design.

Date	Activity	Date	Activity
Sept 2012	Enrolment on EdD	Feb 2014	Transfer meeting
Nov	Research question fixed	April	Presentation of initial findings at school
Dec	Interview schedule drawn up	May	Second tranche interviews commence
Dec-Jan	Transfer to PhD	Mar 2015	Final interview
Jan 2013	Propositions developed	Oct	Article presented for publication
May	First interview	Apr 2016	Article published
June	Coding begins	July	Paper presented at BELMAS Conference
July	Challenging /enabling factors identified	Oct	Thesis presented

Fig 1. Timeline of research programme

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2:1 Introduction

This dissertation sets out to explore a specific area of leadership, that of middle leadership, which is of particular interest to the researcher, and one where there has been little previous empirical study. The subject of the piece is encapsulated by the research question: *'Can effective support mechanisms be identified for those in the formative stages of middle leadership in the secondary independent sector?'* Whilst the subject of senior leadership in schools has had significant research dedicated to it, the sphere of middle leadership is a relatively new and less well understood concept. Those teachers who lead from within the middle attract little attention from the research community, and so we know little about the challenges they face, particularly during the early stages of their appointment. This chapter analyses a range of literature pertinent to the research question.

The researcher begins his review of the literature by considering some of the ways in which the terms leader and leadership are understood. This is an area of some controversy, with the very words meaning different things to different people, and so the researcher looks to establish a clear meaning of the terms within the context of middle leaders in schools. Because there is a symbiotic link between leadership and management, the researcher looks at the differences and the overlap between these two terms, analysing the extent to which the middle leader in schools may be involved in each. There is a debate to be had about the tendency to distil the subject of leading into a series of constituent parts or capabilities, some of which are open to training and development, and whether or not this is advantageous; the researcher interrogates literature which considers each side of this issue. What it is that enables one person to lead another? Arguably it is a combination of the authority that is vested in the leader by the virtue of the position they hold, and that of the influence they are able to bring to bear on those they lead. Leaders in different leadership scenarios will draw their power form different points along the continuum between these two extremes, and the literature gives a guide as to how much authority the middle leader in schools has, and how much influence they need.

Whilst there appears to be a consensus that vision is a key component of leadership, there is less agreement about what actually constitutes vision, and less still about how one is formulated. This subject is analysed, both from the perspective of the middle leader's vision, but also from the view of integrating that vision into the overarching vision of the

organisation. The importance of context, the environment within which the leadership is enacted, is another aspect of leadership that appears to be widely accepted; not only may a leader who is good in one situation not be competent in another, but also that our understanding of what makes a good leader in one arena (soldiering; sport) may not be directly transferrable to a different task (education; commerce). Schools are complex organisations, ones in which it is neither possible nor desirable for one single person to lead effectively, and so the leaders of schools distribute the leadership to sub units, and whether it be an academic department, a pastoral team or an extra-curricular area, the holders of these posts are known as 'middle leaders', this being a specific area of leadership that has particular challenges.

There is now little doubt that leadership can be learned, although there is much discussion about which parts of it are teachable, and what the best methods for doing so are. There is an increasing awareness of the difference in capabilities required from the classroom teacher to the middle leader, and in countries across the globe, strategies are being put in place to prepare school teachers for the role of leadership. A range of such models of practice for leadership development are brought together to demonstrate both similarities and differences, thus giving the reader an overview of how the issue of leadership development in schools is currently tackled by a range of providers. The final part of this chapter draws these threads together and explains how a series of five propositions were constructed from the analysis of the literature which provided a framework for the subsequent research programme.

2:2 Leading and leadership – an overview

Leading and Leadership is a contested concept (Komives and Wagner, 2017), one that means many things to many people (Leviton, 2007), and one which neither scholars nor practitioners have been able to define with precision (Northouse, 2016), indeed if scholars can agree on only one thing, it is that they can't come up with a common definition for leadership (Rost, 1991). Within the field of leadership research, a range of sub-fields has emerged as we have moved into the 21st Century, and these include: authentic leadership in which the authenticity of the leader is emphasised; spiritual leadership which focusses on leadership that utilises values; servant leadership which puts the leader in a position of serving their followers; adaptive leadership in which leaders encourage followers to confront challenges and changes (Leviton, 2007; Northouse, 2016). Authors tend to be

somewhat evasive when it comes to pinning down a definition of leadership, and it may even be that it is unwise to attempt to narrow it down unnecessarily (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003). Although the researcher acknowledges these assertions, in order to fix the reference of these terms there needs to be an agreed consistency to the properties that they have (Devitt, 1981), and it is essential to this study that these concepts are discussed because not only should there be an understanding of the concept of leadership, but also leaders and followers must be understood in relation to one another (Hollander, 1992).

The mercurial quality of good leadership has been compared to that of beauty, in that that it is most difficult to describe, but we tend to agree that we know it when we see it, and to observe leadership at a level at which one can understand what is going on, one needs time and patience, combined with a willingness to reflect on what is being observed (Jackson and Parry, 2011). A key reason why there is so much difficulty in articulating the concept of leadership, is that the philosophical perspective that attempts to illuminate good leadership in fact obscures it. The more 'scientific' our methods of analysis, the less likely we are to see what we are looking for because leadership is not readily accessible through scientific approaches (English and Ehrich, 2015; Grint, 2003). Leadership is an enacted activity, one that exists only through its manifestations, it is visible through the impact that it has on other people, it is a doing word, one that is profoundly interpersonal – one cannot lead without others who will follow (Collinson, 2006: Hopkins, 2003; West-Burnham and Koren, 2014). Leadership is not a function, it is not simply about what individuals are or what they do, but it is about the interactions between people in particular contexts, leaders and followers are part of the same relationship, two sides of the same coin (Clarke et al., 2015; Northouse, 2016; Spillane et al., 1999).

The terms leader and leadership are set apart by some authors. Leader implies an individual, a focal point, a solo act whilst leadership suggests a collective endeavour, one that may be shared by all members of an organisation, these are termed human capital and social capital respectively (Day, 2001). If the leading is devolved or distributed in this way, and the power shared through the members of the organisation, then the categorisation of leader and leadership can become blurred if not redundant as individual leaders in various posts find themselves involved in a collaborative venture, regularly exchanging leadership roles (Harris et al., 2003; Spillane et al., 1999). Leaders are most usually recognised in appointed or assigned roles, those bestowed on them by the organisation,

however emergent or non-positional leadership occurs when person is perceived by others around them as the most influential person in the group, regardless of their title (Northouse, 2016). Much that goes on within schools constitutes a leadership task, from constructing a school vision to monitoring the instruction of reading within a specific class, however there is a wide variation in the 'grain size' of these tasks (Spillane et al., 1999, p.16). Thus, whilst an organisation such as a school may appear to the outsider to have only one 'leader' in the role of the head teacher or principal, the reality is that the leadership in practice is spread across several individuals, and whilst the terms leader, leading and leadership may be difficult to define, there does appear to be a consensus of what it looks like when it is seen to be working well. Whilst there is little agreement on a definition of leadership, it is a topic with universal appeal, one that has been conceptualised and defined in many ways over a long period, yet despite the abundance of writing on the subject, our understanding of the concept remains a challenge to both researchers and practitioners; it is a complex, yet highly prized, phenomenon (Northouse, 2016).

2:3 Educational leadership in the independent sector

Leadership within educational organizations is of increasing importance internationally (Boylan, 2016), and whilst educational leadership development has been a feature of most educational systems in recent decades, (Brundrett and Crawford, 2008), the ways in which this is approached vary according to national, regional and school contexts (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2008). Research into educational leadership has been undertaken in many different environments, and we have a picture of it in many parts of the globe including the USA (Brundrett and Crawford, 2008), Hong Kong (Walker and Dimmock, 2008), the Netherlands (Schleicher, 2012) and Africa (Diko, 2014; Johnson, 2014; Moorosi, 2014; Naidoo and Perumal, 2014), and because the discourse is highly nuanced, our understandings of leadership developed in one place may not necessarily generalise into another (Lazaridou and Beka, 2015). For all that we know of educational leadership in the international field, we know surprisingly little about leadership within the fee paying or independent sector of education in the UK (Harvey, 2015). This sector educates 625,000 children in approximately 2,600 schools, some 7 percent of the pupil population (Independent Schools Council (ISC), 2016).

With the growth of Free schools, Academies and Multi Academy Trusts, the definition of 'Independent' has become less clear, however for the purposes of this thesis, the

researcher distinguishes the independent sector from all state provided schools by the fact that they set their own fee levels, deciding what the cost of a child's education is, and charging accordingly. The empirical evidence on leadership within the independent sector is non-existent, indeed: 'under-researched almost to the point of invisibility' (Harvey, 2007). It has also been reported by Davies and Davies (2014) that research into private schooling remains rare and that which exists tends to consider social factors, and, in terms of recent evidence, is more usually located in Pakistan (e.g. Iqbal, 2012), India (e.g. Woodhead et al., 2013) and Washington DC (e.g. Tooley, 2009) than in the UK. Whilst we know a little about sport provision and sex education within the UK independent sector, hitherto we have had no empirical study into leadership within a field which educates a significant proportion of the UK school population (Harvey, 2015).

2:4 Leadership and management

A key component in this thesis revolves around our understanding of the terms 'leadership' and 'management', for whilst there is a general acceptance that, whilst the edges of the definitions may be blurred, the two words have quite different and distinct meanings (Yang, 2006). The study of leadership can be traced back to Aristotle, however management emerged with the advent of the industrialised society, around the turn of the 20th century, when it was created as a way to make organisations run more efficiently through reducing the level of chaos found within them (Northouse, 2016). Two succinct definitions encapsulate the meanings of the words, and both are cited within Bush (2008), the first being that leadership is linked with change, whilst management is seen as a maintenance activity (Cuban, 1998), the second that leadership is about the development of people whereas management is linked to systems and paper (Day, 2001). Whilst there is a considerable amount of overlap, each is different to the other. In the seventh edition his seminal work on the subject, Northouse identifies leadership as being more concerned with the general process of influence whilst management focuses on activities such as planning, organising and staffing (Northouse, 2016), and it is contended by both Crowther (2009) and Spillane et al. (1999) that leadership without an underpinning of sound management can prove to be a difficult task because it is the stability of organisational structures and routines that enable leaders build their leadership tasks. Both leadership and management are essential functions within the school, and it is perhaps a distinguishing feature of middle leaders within schools that they must be able to fulfil both roles, for not only do they need

to lead change, and develop people, but they must also maintain their department through the management of systems and administration (Gunter, 2001).

Research by Simonet and Tett in which they undertook a quantitative study of 356 self-described experts in leadership and/or management selected from the Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychology membership directory, mapping out their views on 63 well-articulated competencies, points to there being distinct differences between the two terms, combined with clear overlap. Leaders, they observe, need creativity, scope, vision, purpose and tolerance of ambiguity, whilst managers must organise operational implementation, short term planning, orderliness and rule orientation (see also Hannum et al, 2007; Van Velso and McCauley, 2004, page 14-15). Both leaders and managers needing to demonstrate initiative, set goals, be trustworthy, formulate timelines and make decisions. (Simonet and Tett, 2012). They describe this as 'co-dimensionality' (page 206). Whilst all teachers are managers to a degree in that they are responsible for the management of pupils and resources, along with the management of the learning process, only some have the responsibility for other adults, and taking such responsibility is a key factor in any definition of leadership (Early and Weindling, 2004). It is clear that, whilst there are identifiable differences between leadership and management, the two constructs also have significant overlap, for if a manager is influencing a group towards meeting goals, then they are leading, and if a leader is involved in planning and controlling assets they are managing (Northouse, 2016).

2:5 Leadership capabilities

In order to lead others, the leader requires a range of skills, knowledge, and personal abilities that are appropriate to the task, and these are identified and categorised by writers in differing ways. For the purpose of clarity within this study, the researcher has chosen to refer throughout to 'capabilities' as the generic term of personal assets that are needed by a leader. The researcher accepts that the word 'capabilities' is a contested concept; however, he deals with this issue later in the study when discussing underlying philosophies in the Methodology chapter of the thesis.

Through trawling the literature pertinent to educational leadership, the researcher spotted a concept, propounded by three different researchers that, whilst each used different terminology, they described the same phenomenon. None of the writers referred to each other and, so far as the researcher could see, none of the researchers drew their concept

from the same source; they each appeared to have reached the same conclusion independently. The phenomenon described, takes the competencies required by leaders and groups them into three categories. The first category is the character traits or dispositions we each possess. This is not the same as the great man and trait theories that existed in the early days of leadership theory, but an acceptance that each of us, by virtue of our genes and early upbringing has a set of personality characteristics that are largely fixed. The second category is that of skills, by which each of the researchers means those capabilities that can be readily taught such as administration or finance. These skills may be essential for the leader on a day-to-day basis, and they can be readily learned through courses, distance learning, mentoring. The third category of capability required by leaders is that of perspective, the ability to draw on previous experience in order to predict future events, the quality of prediction being influenced by the quantity and quality of prior experience, along with the level of reflection, evaluation and integration of those experiences.

Whilst Professor J. Conger was Professor at the London Business School, he was interviewed by Doh, and he cited three categories of capability to be found in anyone who leads, and that these areas can be defined as dispositions, skills and perspectives. Dispositions, he argued, are those parts of our personality that we bring to the role of leader, and include factors such as temperament, mood, outlook, and are the product of the leader's life, family and, perhaps, genes. Skills are those things which we need to know in order to be able to lead, and include both knowledge and the leader's ability to use that knowledge. Crucially, Conger argues that such skills can be taught. Perspectives, he contends, are built over time through self-reflection and experience, and may include specific capabilities such as communication or presentation skills, along with broader aspects such as strategic thinking. These, he suggests, can be developed within the leader through a process of coaching (Doh, 2013).

This theme of differing areas of capability is reflected in the writings of Leithwood et al. (2003) who revisit the results of a major piece of research undertaken by Leithwood and Jantzi in which the original sample was 1,253 teachers in 115 schools in the Canadian province of Ontario (Leithwood and Jantzi, 1997). They begin by categorising traits, those personality attributes that cannot be changed, and which they define as the leader's values, their personality, their orientation towards people and their moods. The next category is

entitled capacities, which they see as those capabilities we can learn, and which include knowledge, both procedural (how to) and declarative (knowing about); relationship with both colleagues and pupils; problem solving and communication. The third category that emerges from the researchers' findings is that of practices, and these are defined as the capabilities that leaders develop through experience such as: taking the initiative; performance of administrative tasks; supporting the work of other staff; confronting issues and making hard decisions. The view that Leithwood et al. take is that some of the capabilities identified through their research are much easier to develop than others, and it is claimed that there is a higher probability of being able to develop capacities and practices than traits, a view that is also extolled by Coleman (2005).

More recently, this theme of a continuum that runs between leadership skills that can be learned and those traits that are embedded within us, has been picked up by Church (2014) Whose *Leadership Potential Blueprint*, brings together some of the work in his 150 articles and book chapters located in the American commercial sector. Church also categorises capabilities into three areas. First, he identifies those core traits or attributes of an individual that are the characteristics which are either genetically determined and/or those which are shaped early in life. They include two central factors: personality, by which he meant traits, preferences and orientations; and cognitive capabilities which are defined as raw intelligence, strategic thinking and working with complexity. Church contends that, whilst it may not be possible to make a significant change to these core traits, it may be possible through coaching to help the leader make the best use of the abilities that they have in this area. His second category is that of functional knowledge and technical skills which can generally be enhanced through methods such as self-directed learning, training courses, job shadowing, coaching and mentoring. Church's third category concerns experiential learning motivation and drive which can be enhanced through engaging the leader in activities and interventions that focus directly on their development. As part of a development programme, he recommends the planning for challenging experiences that are relevant to both current and future roles. This can involve strategies such as new challenges within the leader's current role such as job redesign or special assignments, or by planning for future opportunities and progression.

These three researchers, each of whom comes from a very different background (British business, Canadian education and American commerce respectively) have categorised the

capabilities required for leadership into three similar areas, and more recently it has been further contended that traits are less easy to measure, and of less importance than drawing on life's previous experiences (Claxton, Costa and Kallick, 2016). Such an attempt to break a complex phenomenon into constituent parts has its detractors, and a counter argument by Carroll et al. (2008) strikes a note of caution concerning the promotion and adoption of competency models and frameworks. The authors argue that such competency models rely on the reduction and fragmentation of leadership because, by their nature competencies can only be articulated in what is 'objective, measurable, technical and tangible' (p365). Any attempt to identify teacher leaders in advance of working with them within their context is most likely to be unsuccessful because of the challenge of defining leadership through identifiable personal or professional attributes (Crowther, 2009). Thus, competency models tend to isolate those behaviours considered by the proponents to be ideal for leaders to possess in order for them to engender leadership effectiveness. Leaders are duly measured to check the extent to which they have mastered the individual competencies with the assistance of targeted training.

Whilst the use of such competencies may be of reassurance to organisations, their widespread application may prove to be counterproductive when it comes to fostering genuine leadership development. Leadership competencies are by their nature, partial, static, individualistic, and context free, however leadership development should emphasise the everyday, localised nitty-gritty of leadership through the lens of those who are involved in delivering it rather than the objective, rational and individualistic perspective of the 'expert'. In short, people are different, leadership is value laden and leadership is context based, none of which are open to scientific scrutiny (English, 2003). A further observation of the limits of competency models is made by Brundrett (1999) who contends that there are difficulties with attempts to distinguish the critical qualities or traits of leadership because people acknowledged as effective leaders often display quite differing qualities to one another. This discussion around competencies is a moot point because, whilst the reduction of leadership into manageable 'bits' makes the life of the researcher (and the leadership trainer) significantly easier, as Carrol et al. (2008) go on to argue, it detracts from the 'richness, texture and possibilities' of leadership (p376).

2:6 The acquisition and development of capabilities

The role of the middle leader in a school is different to that of the classroom teacher (Bush, 2011; Bush, 2008) and so, if the newly appointed head of department has no prior experience of leading, then a new set of capabilities needs to be learned. Brothers Stuart and Hubert Dreyfus proposed a model of skills development based on a seminal piece of research at the University of California, Berkley, Operations Research Centre for the United States Air Force Office of Scientific research through which they identified five levels of skill acquisition and defined as novice, competent, proficient, expert and master (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1980), a model that has subsequently been adopted by many educators (Carraccio et al., 2008). During the early stages of learning a new skill, the novice will rely on an analytical and theoretical method of reasoning, however as they become more experienced and confident, they will draw on previously experienced 'scripts' to use a non-analytical or pattern making reasoning (Carraccio et al., 2008). Through experience of different situations, the learner adds to their repertoire of scripts, enabling them to expand ever more complex patterns or mental maps enabling them to make swift, intuitive decisions (Sergiovani, 1985; West-Burnham and Koren, 2014). Orr gives a clear and reality grounded description of this transition from analytical to non-analytical skills in his study of a photocopy machine organisation where the training manuals and trouble-shooting guides tell a very different, rationally ordered story to those of the repair technicians. Orr found that the technicians supplemented the explicit instructions with a rich, shared library of tacit stories which they used to diagnose and solve problems. This demonstrated that, whilst the formal practices may be readily accessible, they serve as insufficient roadmaps to practice, and that we need to undertake, share and reflect on experience in order to understand tasks as they unfurl (Orr, 1996).

Leaders in schools learn to draw on a broad, deep, and ever-growing repertoire of experience, none of which will emerge from teaching alone (OECD, 2008), indeed it is argued that leadership can probably only really be learned through the cut-and-thrust experience of success and failure in real-life scenarios (Marshall, 2012; Yukl, 2010). Because those appointed to middle leader positions will be leading peers, possibly for the first time, and because this calls for different capabilities to those of the classroom teacher, the emergent leader will most likely be in the novice category of skills acquisition. It can be argued from this, that a training programme for such leaders needs to have an awareness

of the specific needs of the novice learner, and that their training and development should differ from that of a more experienced leader.

2:7 Power

What is it that enables one person to persuade another to do as the first person wishes? It can be summed up in the single word 'power'. Power is the capacity to influence, and people have power when they are in a position to affect the beliefs of others (Northouse, 2016). This has been described by Busher et al. (2000) as 'a hidden but all persuasive ingredient to successful leadership' (p106). It is contended that the power to lead comes from two sources. Firstly, authority, which is the legitimate power that is gifted to individuals by virtue of the position they hold within an organisation, and secondly influence, which is the ability to affect situations and which is dependent upon personal characteristics and expertise (Bush, 2011). These have been coined 'positional power' and 'personal power' or influence with the power of the latter being ascribed to the leader by their followers through the leader's personal leadership skills of, for example, being a role model, being highly competent, or through their consideration for others (Northouse, 2016). A leader's ability to accomplish is due in large part to their utilization of power which they use to influence others, and thus power is axiomatic of leadership (Jackson and Parry, 2011). So, authority as a positional power is bestowed by the organisation, and can be changed. This has the potential to be an important aspect of leadership within schools, because it is in the organisation's written policies and job descriptions that such authority is enshrined, thus giving leaders legitimacy within their roles. Thus, authority is external to the individual in that it is bestowed upon them, whereas personal power or influence is internal because the leader may have, or can indeed develop, the capabilities required to influence others.

The school, of course, can change the authority it vests in its people, and it can do that through policy. Authority then is formal, structural and static, it is sanctioned by the organisation, flows downward, and it implies involuntary submission by subordinates. Authority's source is solely structural, and circumscribed by the organisation. Influence on the other hand is informal, dynamic and tactical. It is not sanctioned by the organisation, is multi directional, and implies voluntary submission. Influence's source may be the personal characteristics and expertise of the leader, and its legitimacy is typically ambiguous (Bacharach and Lawler, 1980). Busher and Harris (2000) contend that leaders cannot

achieve their aims through their teams without having access to moral suasion, resources, coercion, expertise in their subject area and personal enthusiasm and commitment, and it is also argued that it is to influence that the majority of good leaders will turn, and suggested that it is the authority of expertise that leads back to the school specific aspect of leadership which is that of subject expert or leading professional (Busher and Harris, 2000). It is of note however that there is the contrary view that, in the education sector, traditional associations of leadership with authority are difficult to shift (McMahon, 2016). Effective leadership is then, founded on the credibility of the leader rather than coercion, and this credibility is one of the core elements of positive or enabling approaches to leadership. Credibility is enhanced by a leader's demonstration of their values in the use of power and influence, and it is those leaders who serve through putting the interests of the organisational goal before their own who find themselves in the possession of the moral suasion to influence others, indeed the problem with coercive behaviour is that, whilst others may acquiesce, unless a positive relationship exists, allegiance is most likely to be soulless and temporary (Drew, 2010). As such, credibility can be seen as the dynamic currency of leadership (Leavy, 2003).

Teams consist of individuals with differing backgrounds and different agendas, and the skill of the leader is to meld these to his or her vision. Teachers are, as a rule, not well led by coercion, as it goes against the grain of their professional independence (Bush, 2000). Good political leaders will use their powers of persuasion first, negotiate second, and use coercion only if necessary - authority needs to be used judiciously (Bolman and Deal, 1991). It thus takes a particular blend of personality to positively influence both the individuals and the team in order to strive for the vision; however, as many middle leaders find in their role, the most difficult task they face is the leading and management, through influence, of other people (Busher and Harris, 2000; Northouse, 2016).

2:8 Vision

The reality of most leaders is defined by chaos and confusion rather than predictability and reason, and the act of leadership is, in part, the desire to bring a degree of order to chaos through their influence (Ackoff, 1979). Such chaos is brought around by a number of factors, the most significant of which is arguably the people that interface with the leader (Day, 2003), and it is suggested that leaders need to accept that 'messiness and muddle' is a part of their role (Busher et al, 2000). The task of improvement of an organisation lies

with the organisation itself rather than the individuals that populate them, because it is the organisation that is in a position to create and nurture agreement on what is worth achieving (Elmore, 2000). One of the most powerful dimensions of leadership is the establishment of a clear sense of direction and purpose, and that the defining, discussing and communicating of a clear set of values for all in the team is essential in order to establish purpose and direction (Bell and Harrison, 1995; Crowther, 2009; Day et al., 2011; Elmore, 2000; Kohles et al., 2013; Murphy and Torre, 2015). However, leaders do not invent their organisation's purpose in a vacuum, but draw forth a purpose that resonates with the values and capabilities of their people, and with the nature of their business (Wheeler et al., 2007). They need to know where they are going, nominating a sense of direction around which to galvanise the chaos, and so they need a vision or a mental picture of a preferred future, one that articulates the values, beliefs and purposes of a system as it might possibly be (Bush, 2011; Martin et al., 2014). Vision formation and its subsequent articulation is held to be a central component of leader performance, and followers need to know where they need to be heading as defined by the vision before they are likely to agree to the direction and commit to it (Kantabutra, 2010; Shipman et al., 2010). Teachers, it is suggested, are most likely to show commitment if they feel valued by those who have responsibility for them, and a successful vision is one that is contributed to by those staff (Bush & Middlewood, 2005; Morrison, 2017; Leithwood et al., 1999).

Vision involves the creation of mental models, and it is suggested that these may be categorised into two forms: a descriptive model which reflects the world as it is perceived, and a prescriptive model which suggest the world as it might be, and it is this prescriptive model that provides the foundation on which vision is built. With the application of this prescriptive mental model, through integration of personal and interpersonal meaning, a vision will emerge which may subsequently be articulated by the leader as a foundation for addressing a change event (Shipman et al., 2010). In its simplest form, the leadership process can be conceptualised around three stages of activity. First, the leader will make an on-going assessment of opportunities and constraints in both the internal and external environments in order to determine the direction of the team. Second, the leader will formulate the direction into formal strategies and goals, articulating these to their team members. The final stage involves gaining commitment and mobilising the team to implement the strategies and goals, undertaking the initiatives to achieve them. Whilst

these stages appear linear, in reality they overlap, and environmental changes require the stages to be continually repeated (Conger et al., 1997).

Shipman et al. (2010) suggest that a key component in the process of creating a vision is that of forecasting, whereby the leader focuses on the hypothetical manipulation of causes where goals are considered as given. They further suggest that this is a fertile area for leadership development or training, with trainees for example considering a range of situations, looking at potential losses and gains, and thinking about various contingencies. However, they also make the point that this process makes significant cognitive demands and is very time consuming. Whilst giving the leader time to think may prove to be of value, it is not open, unrestrained thought that will result in the production of strong vision statements, but focused thinking that pays due regard to specific organisational problems. Although a leader's vision might imply the removal of given restrictions and contingencies, it does need to draw on the personal experience of the leader, accept the environment within which it operates and take into account the actual or anticipated responses of the followers, thus vision, whilst ultimately a cognitive construction, needs to be grounded in the context of the leader's own life (Strange and Mumford, 2005). A vision in the context of leadership is a shared concept, however the first step in enabling a shared vision is for the leader to know their own mission; the second step involves the process of enlisting and inspiring others through a range of communication strategies. Communication enables the leader to not only help the team as they discuss it with others, but it also assists the leader to internalise and shape the vision, forming it into a more concrete picture of a preferred future (Martin et al., 2014). Leaders need then to harmonise a multitude of purposes, enabling people to understand the vision, and not just follow a plan (Cassidy et al., 2008), a quality that has been coined as 'sensemaking' and may be defined as the essence of leadership (cited in Jackson and Parry 2011, and attributable to Karl Weik, 1995).

Despite there being widespread support for the creation and use of vision in the literature, both in the field of education and in the wider arena, when the subject is drilled down into, it becomes apparent that there is little agreement on what is really meant by the word vision, and little known about how leaders go about creating viable visions. Kantabutra, writing in the International Journal of Education Management contends that '*Despite its apparent importance, vision definition is still not generally agreed on'.* (Kantabutra, 2010). Martin et al. augment this uncertainty: '*Although there is a shared understanding of how*

important and critical a vision is for understanding leadership and effective transformation in organisations, little is known about how leaders create vision. …moreover, there is sparse evidence in the literature about influencing factors in the process of developing a vision' (Martin et al., 2014. P.104). Vision is generally considered to be an essential component of leadership, however there appears to be less agreement about how it is constructed, or what it really looks like when it exists. A factor that should be recognised in this discussion on vision is that a vision is not in itself a plan, rather it is a broader road map, and one which is not the sole preserve of the leader, but an area where the contributions of others is critical (Shipman et al., 2010).

2:9 The school as the context

A common theme throughout much of the literature on leading and leadership is that the situation or context within which the leader operates has a direct bearing on the leader's ability to lead, to such an extent that it is contended that an effective leader in one situation may not make an effective leader in another – context is a key component of leading (Clarke and O'Donoghue, 2017; OECD, 2008; Simonet and Tett, 2012; West-Burnham and Koren, 2014; Wheeler et al., 2007). Leadership does not occur in a vacuum, but within a given organisational context and culture (Leviton, 2007; Northouse, 2016), thus If the context is so important, it behoves the researcher to look not only at schools as the environment within which the study is set, but also at the specific post of middle leader within the school in order to attempt to capture some of the nuances that define this particular role. Schools are perhaps the most complex of all our social inventions because, unlike other organisations, the product of the school is an individual person, and this gives specific and unique challenges of leadership and management (Hanson, 2003; Jinnett and Kern, 2007). From a leadership perspective, schools have a number of particular characteristics: They have unique goals; there are highly porous boundaries; the employees (teachers) are extremely committed; their work is hectic and fast paced; there is little time for reflection during the working day and, in comparison to organisations such as the military, governments and many large companies, the structures of schools are unusually flat (Davies, 2009).

Before the researcher drills down into this area however, he asks why leadership is considered to be of importance within schools. Effective leadership is increasingly accepted as a vital component of successful organisations (Bush, 2008), and it has been claimed that

the quality of leadership within a school was second only to classroom teaching in the influence that it had on school learning (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003). Evidence points clearly to leadership making a significant difference in how groups act, and this impact ranges in size from a small handful of people such as a department, to a whole school (OECD, 2008). On the conclusion of large-scale studies of schooling, it has been reported that whilst leadership may explain only about three to five percent of the variation in student learning, this effect is actually one quarter of the total of all school factors. It has been argued that a fundamental finding of research into school effectiveness and improvement has been the powerful impact of leadership on successful organisational practice (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003). The Teacher Training Agency (TTA) refer to both research and inspection as evidence which demonstrates the correlation between the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils, and between the quality of leadership within the school and the quality of teaching (cited in Brundrett, 1999), and findings from a range of school contexts within differing countries draw similar conclusions in that schools that are effective and are able to improve are led by teachers who make a measurable and significant contribution to the effectiveness of their staff (Busher and Harris, 2000; OECD, 2008). Brundrett and Terrell (2004) broaden this perspective on leadership, drawing attention to the evidence from a generation of international studies which has emphasised the importance of quality leadership in successful schools, concluding that this assertion has proved to be remarkably consistent across both time and space.

Every school is unique in its own way, and successful leaders address the peculiarities of their own organisation accordingly (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003; OECD, 2008). All leadership can be described as 'bounded' in that it takes place within specific situations or contexts (Busher and Harris, 2000). It can be argued that if a leader is defined by the environment within which they work, and schools have distinct characteristics, then leading within a school context must take on its own particular hue. This is influenced by the culture of the organisation, something which exists through the ideas, meanings and beliefs of the people within it which, even if not made explicit by the organisation, lies 'between the heads' of people (Alvesson, 2002). Schein (1992) contends that culture and leadership are inextricably linked to one another in that leaders first create culture, and once the culture exists, it determines the criteria for leadership. He goes on to argue that it is essential for leaders to have a cognisance of the cultures within which they are embedded because if

they do not, then the culture is liable to manage the leader rather than the other way around. The particular qualities that leaders rely upon differ according to the situation they are in, and so a leader who is effective in one situation may well be less effective in another; and so it is observed that the possession of particular traits or qualities does not guarantee success in all leadership situations (Bush, 2011; Drew, 2010; Simonet and Tett, 2012). The effectiveness of a leadership style is dependent upon the situation it is used in. There is no sense in describing a person as an effective or ineffective leader in general terms, rather to see the person as being an effective leader in one situation because what may be considered strong leadership in one context may look substantially different in another, thus leadership practices are not replicable in a recipe fashion (Simonet and Tett, 2012; Wheeler et al., 2007).

Brundrett (1999) states that there has been criticism of the various models of leadership over a long period, in particular when the model originates in one type of organisation, and is then transferred uncritically to a different context. He suggests however, that these models provide a starting point for self-reflection and are used as a lens through which we view our own individual approach to leadership. Bush points out that whilst there is a substantial array of literature on leadership and management within educational organisations, there are few sources that address the theoretical foundations of good practice, and it has been further noted that, because of the particular characteristics of schools, caution should be taken when trying to apply management models from outside the educational setting (Bush, 2012). It is further suggested that there is no single, all-embracing theory of educational leadership. This is at least in part because of the tremendous diversity of educational institutions, ranging from the small rural primary school to the largest university, augmented by the varied nature of problems that are encountered in schools on a day to day basis, and compounded by the multifaceted nature of theory in educational leadership and management (Bush, 2008; OECD, 2008). It is this wide variety of situations that is sometimes seemingly overlooked by the literature on leadership in schools in their universal and decontextualized discourse. The dominant focus on 'leadership' can ignore the importance of context, and so may not address the contextual dysfunctionalities that can obstruct leadership amongst school managers in some educational settings (Mertkan, 2014).

Schools are different to other leadership contexts (Clarke and O'Donoghue, 2017), and every school is different to any other, and so each is a different context. Whilst many writers guard against making generalisations across such differing contexts, are there any common themes that can be picked out across educational leadership? Leithwood and Riehl undertook a comprehensive review of the research into successful school leadership, based on a range of academic studies. The authors argued that efforts to develop leadership in education should be built on a foundation of knowledge of educational leadership that is already in existence. To this end, they describe six claims, defendable by the research evidence that they believe to be generalizable to most school contexts. These claims, briefly, are:

- Successful leadership in schools does make an important contribution to student learning. The effects of leadership are primarily indirect, working through a range of variables that include the organisation, the curriculum, and factors to be found within the classroom.

- The primary sources of good leadership within schools are located within the head teacher and the teachers.

- In addition to the head teacher and the teachers, leadership is and should be distributed to others within the school.

- A core set of 'basic' leadership practices is valuable in almost all contexts, including setting the direction and developing the people within the organisation.

- In addition to engaging in a set of core leadership practices, successful leaders need to acknowledge the accountability context within which they operate.

- Many successful school leaders serve their students by building powerful forms of teaching and learning, thus creating strong communities within the school. They nurture the development of educational cultures, so expanding the social capital of their students.

(Leithwood and Riehl, 2003)

The context of school leadership is that, ultimately it is of benefit to the education of young people, and Martin et al. (2017) make the point that those who lead within schools in the 21st century need to recognise that it is an inquiry-based profession which requires them to think, respond and act in the best interests of the children they serve.

2:10 Distributing the leadership

The complexities of teams are such that, not infrequently, they will benefit from a shared leadership amongst the team members (Northouse, 2016), and such shared team leadership occurs when individual members of the team take on leadership tasks in order to influence the team with the aim of maximising the team's performance (Day et al., 2004). Schools are no different (see Jinnet and Kern, 2007), and whilst the importance of the overall school leader is acknowledged, it is hard to see how one person can take an organisation as complex as a school forward single handedly (Brundrett 1999), indeed it has been observed that, in many places, the move away from a single leader is becoming more commonplace (OECD, 2008). The constantly expanding breadth and complexity required of school leaders means that it is no longer possible for the head teacher or principal to be the sole leader, even if it is they who are ultimately held to account (Bush, 2008). Because of this, leadership has been steadily delegated down to heads of departments and pastoral heads, and these post holders are becoming increasingly responsible for the effective management of schools (Gunter, 2001).

Schools, like other types of organisations, are heading towards a flatter structure that enable the responsibility for thinking about organisational effectiveness more broadly amongst its members, thus releasing problem solving capacities that tend to be constrained by hierarchy, and so maximising the human capacity within the organisation (Coleman, 2005; Coles and Southworth, 2005; Leithwood et al., 1999). Because in any organisation some people are better at doing some things than others, they tend to specialise or develop their specific competencies that are related to their dispositions, interests, prior knowledge, or skills (Elmore, 2000). Whilst this concept of delegating or spreading the leadership is widely accepted, the attributes required by the school head teacher or principal are not the same as those required by leaders in other areas, although each is of similar significance to the organisation (Crowther, 2009). As increasing accountability and responsibility is demanded of school leaders, the leadership needs to be distributed effectively across school, and this can be achieved both through formal leadership structures, and through more informal ad hoc collaborative groups based on expertise and specific needs (Carpenter, 2015; Schleicher, 2012), although for such diverse competencies to be wrought into a coherent whole requires that an understanding of how the individual players vary (Elmore, 2000).

For Jackson and Parry (2012), distributed leadership is a departure from the idea that leadership and followership lie within clearly distinguishable persons, but that leadership, like power and information can move between different people who are at differing levels within an organisation, a perspective that has been described as being 'stretched over' the practice of two or more leaders and followers (Spillane et al., 1999). Successive studies into the most effective schools have shown that leadership has been extended beyond the senior leadership team to encompass other levels within the organisation (Harris, 1999), and that a distributive model can have multiplicative leverage rather than additive in that the interactions between two or more leaders can amount to more than the sum of the individual leaders' practice (Spillane et al, 1999). It has been suggested that a new system of leadership is emerging, one that empowers both the staff and the pupils to take ownership of leadership functions (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2011). However, in acknowledging that there is risk in relying on one person to sustain change within a school, the ultimate test of transformation is for the change to outlive its instigator; when the best leader's work is complete, the team will say that they did it themselves (Mulford, 2003). Assessments of the leadership role of the head teacher imply that giving other staff within the school real responsibility and developing their leadership and management competencies is the best way of an organisation moving forward, however this means relinquishing the idea of structure as control, and viewing structure as the vehicle for empowering others within the school (Busher and Harris, 2000). There can also a degree of risk for the team members, because it takes a level of courage for an individual to step forward and provide leadership outside the formal role of team leader (Amos and Klimoski, 2014), however it has been observed that teams that do have distributed leadership have less conflict, more consensus, more trust, and greater cohesion than those that do not have distributed leadership (Bergman et al. 2012).

Sharing or delegating the leadership of an organisation as complex as a school has three advantages: First, it takes away the impossible task of one person attempting to run the school single handedly; second it encourages a pool of talent to grow which gives strength in depth, and enables succession management to be developed; third it has the strong potential to be a good motivator of those in middle positions within the school because they have a sense of ownership. (Bush and Middlewood, 2005). This distribution of the leadership involves wide ranging sources of direction that are located within the

organisation, and these can be made more coherent through a common culture (Elmore 2000). At the heart of distributed leadership is collaboration and collegiality, however for such an approach to work a high degree of trust is essential in order to support the leadership habitus (Branson et al, 2016; Harris et al., 2003). Elliot (1999) expands on this view by arguing that school leadership is not really concerned with the concept of a heroic individual, commanding from the top, but with a blend of nurture, support and cajolement as appropriate. They argue that making a school work on a day to day basis is dependent upon the contribution that all participants make to the organisation, and that it is the role of the leader to bind all these activities together, facilitating the aspirations of others and draw the disparate stakeholders together.

There is also a potential downside to the distributing of leadership in that the formal leader has to relinquish their power to others, but in doing so, they are unable to hand over the ultimate responsibility also. This puts them in a potentially vulnerable position because not only does it challenge their authority, but it also leaves them accountable to external agencies for the actions of others (Harris et al., 2003; MacBeath, 2005). A counter view to this position is that, rather than leadership being distributed or gifted by the head teacher of the school, leadership has the potential to emerge from within as members of the staff rise to challenges as they see them. This creates 'parallel leadership' within the school, whereby different strata are exhibiting leadership qualities that are interdependent rather than hierarchal (Crowther, 2009; MacBeath, 2005). In support of this contention, research across a range of countries by OECD (2008) suggest that principals feel that this distribution of leadership, rather than isolate, serves to extend and enlarge their power and influence. Middle leaders then, can be seen as the 'glue' that hold schools together because they are the key personnel for converting policy into action, and because middle leaders are uniquely positioned within schools to act as a fulcrum between those working in the classroom and the senior leaders, they have become a key group within the chain of distributed leadership (Brundrett and Terrell, 2004).

2:11 Positioning the middle leader within the school context

The term 'leadership' within schools is a relatively new one, and particularly 'middle leadership' which has grown in acceptable parlance within recent years. What is now called 'leadership' within school nomenclature was previously called 'management' and prior to that was known as 'educational administration'. The growth of league tables of exam

results, particularly in the UK, has further shunted the centre of gravity of accountability towards the middle tiers of the school, where heads of academic departments are increasingly held accountable for the public examination results of their department (Gunter, 2001). Whatever the reasons for this occurrence, this decentralisation of education leadership has been a notable and significant shift in many countries over recent years (OECD, 2008).

The middle leaders in the secondary tier of schools are those who hold posts such as heads of academic subjects, pastoral heads, key stage coordinators, SENCOs and ICT coordinators. These people carry out a wide range of responsibilities that are crucial to the effective running of the school, and are key to the raising of educational standards (Bush, 2003; Busher et al., 2007; OECD, 2008), and have been described as the 'synapses within a firm's brain' (King et al., 2001. P.95) They are the engine room of the school, they lead teams of teachers, turning the strategies of the senior leadership into outstanding classroom practice on a daily basis. High-performing middle leaders work to drive forward teacher quality within their areas of responsibility, and they do this through a range of means that includes curriculum knowledge, lesson observations, holding their staff to account, and developing their team members. They are translators of policy rather than originators (Glover et al., 1998) and promote consistency across the school through collaboration with, and challenging of, their fellow middle leaders, thus exerting an influence on whole school behaviours (Toop, 2013).

Research undertaken within the UK suggests that subject leaders can make a difference to the performance of their department in much the same way that head teachers make a difference to overall school performance (Busher and Harris, 2000), and the Department for Education and Skills (2005) report that research concluded that:

- Middle leaders play a vital role in maintaining and developing pupils' learning experiences and achievements.
- Senior leadership teams need and expect their middle leaders to be engaged in school developments.
- The most effective schools have a leadership team that extends beyond the senior leadership team, and involves leadership at all levels within a school.

(Page 4)

A literature review sponsored by the National College for School Leadership into the role and purpose of middle leaders in schools drew a series of conclusions about middle leadership within schools. Their main findings were:

- Middle leaders such as heads of department and subject leaders play a crucial role in developing and maintaining both the nature and the quality of pupils' learning. However, the way in which they do this is heavily influenced by the circumstances in which they work.

- There is strong rhetoric by middle managers about collegiality within their departments. However, this is sometimes more aspired to than real, and may in fact sometimes be a substitute for professional autonomy.

- Middle leaders display a strong resistance to monitoring the quality of their colleagues' work. Those middle leaders who did manage to introduce classroom observation, tended to do so as a collaborative learning activity for the whole department, rather than as a management activity for the subject leader.

- Subject leaders' authority is based on their subject knowledge and their competence as teachers rather than their appointed position. High professional competence did not appear to carry with it the perceived right to advise other teachers on their practice.

- Subject knowledge plays an important part in the professional identity held by both subject leaders and their colleagues. This then can make the subject department a significant barrier to large-scale change.

- Whilst senior staff expect middle leaders to become involved in the wider school context, many are reluctant to do so. They see themselves as departmental advocates, and this is exacerbated by the hierarchal structure of the secondary school which also acts as a constraint to the degree to which subject leaders can act collegiately.

(Bennet et al., 2003)

Whilst this would appear to make middle leaders an ideal focus for professional development because of the leverage that can be exercised through them, they are not a clearly defined group of people working within the school. They are a very diverse group who not only have responsibility delegated to them, but who are also directly responsible to others, thus any attempt to make generalisations about middle leaders is likely to be of

limited value, given the tremendous disparity of middle leader roles, and the contexts within which they operate (Turner, 2007). A further feature of middle leaders within schools is that whilst people lead at different levels within the organisation, they also often follow, so for example, a leader of a subject department may be subordinate to a member of his team in a pastoral context. Wenger (1998) refers to 'communities of practice' and schools have many of these in the forms of academic departments, pastoral teams, leadership teams. Most staff will be a member of more than one community, and they will need to adapt their practice as they cross the boundary from one community to another. Middle leaders may experience difficulty in coordinating and managing those on the periphery, because they work in different departments, or they are located in a different part of the school for teaching, and this can cause stress as they find themselves caught in a squeeze of conflicting demands (Danielson, 2016). Schools, like other communities, have individual people, each of whom has their own agenda. The role of the leaders in schools is to draw those individual agendas toward the common goals of the institution, because without clear leadership, staff are prone to pursue their own individual interests and beliefs, rather than attempting to discover ones that will best serve the interests of their students (Busher and Harris, 2000).

Middle leaders must, by definition, lead at least one other person, and it is estimated that most middle leaders operating within schools will lead a number of people, although the number is likely to remain within single figures. Teaching is an individual and in many ways independent role, sometimes described as brick classroom, silo or balkanised. Terrell and Terrell (cited in Brundrett and Terrell, 2004) recognise the particular issues that this brings to school leadership when they observe that there is perhaps not enough discussion of the fact that the bulk of teachers' departmental time is spent teaching in their own classroom and that the time that is spent as an explicit member of a team tends to be during small amounts of directed time. The authors go on to point out that, because a key factor in all leadership and management (and particularly middle management) is that of interpersonal relationships, much time and effort is taken up in this aspect, not least because such as significant part of the team work takes place in scenarios such as break time or between lessons, often when children are around and invariably under the pressure of time. This is one of the facets that make middle leadership in schools highly contextual, and is a factor that appears to be rarely referred to in the wider literature on leadership. Of course, it can

be argued that no leadership is easy, and that that is the nature of the role, however leadership in different arenas will each bring their own dimension. This pressure of time, (or more accurately, the lack of it) is an aspect of school middle leadership that is of particular significance. Whilst teachers and teacher leaders may indeed spend much of their time working alone, it is contended that effective schools tend to be distinguished by a constant interchange of professional information at both a formal and an informal level, and the evidence suggests that teachers in fact are at their most efficient when they are supported by their colleagues and work in an atmosphere of collegiality (Harris et al., 2003).

Gunter (2001) points out that effective departments are connected with the head of department as the performer of a leadership and management role. She argues that from this there needs to be strong emphasis on the need to ensure that the role is clearly defined, and that it is understood, monitored and evaluated. She further argues that it is essential that the promotion or appointment of departmental heads is dependent upon them being knowledgeable about their subject, both for their own creditability and for the educational leadership that is required. She contends that management and leadership skills are not enough.

The dimensions of the middle leader's role can be described as: bridging and brokering with senior staff and colleagues; creating social cohesion through a shared vision and collegial culture; mentoring; creating professional networks and using power. Leaders cannot get things done without having access to: moral suasion; resources; coercion; expertise in curriculum and organisational practice and personal commitment. To develop commitment in the members of their team, these middle leaders need to articulate a clear sense of purpose or vision; involve their staff in developing their own sense of purpose, helping them to identify their own targets; translate this sense of purpose into clear and obtainable objectives; encourage their staff to take ownership of their work; value their staff, maximise their potential within the subject area; remove barriers to, and provide opportunities for the achievement of the agreed objectives (Busher and Harris, 2000). Morrison (2017) used a mixed methods research design to find that the leadership characteristics most frequently associated with effective change included being visionary and committed to the school and the staff therein, so creating a collegial network that is mutually supportive. Because the followers are part of the symbiotic relationship between leader and follower, and a composing part of the leadership activity, for the leader to lead

effectively, they need to adapt their behaviour to the characteristics of their staff (Spillane et al., 1999). However, whilst the ideal scenario is that a subject leader will have a mixture of people with differing skills and abilities that the leader can reflect on, using the different strengths for the betterment of the whole, the reality may actually be that a subject leader inherits a team who do not behave as a team or who do not engage in any teamwork; thus whilst the middle leader can be very influential in the development of the school, they can also be hampered by the micro politics within it and so can readily find themselves embroiled in conflicts of values, goals, purposes and interests (Busher and Harris, 2000; Schon, 1991).

2:12 Challenges of the middle leader role

It is contended that whilst a great deal is known about the type of leadership exercised by administrators generally, much less is understood about the types of leadership that are likely to work for teachers working within the specific context of a school (Leithwood et al., 1999). That said, the growth in qualitative research within the field of education over recent years is illuminating the complexity of the role of the middle leader within a school, one which frequently goes beyond fulfilling the criteria set out in their job description, and pointing towards a greater understanding of the location of power that they have within the organisation (Gunter, 2001). The typical day of a middle leader is described as being one that is long, stressful and in which all the work is never completed (Gunter, 2001), and subject leaders in the school situation have a complex set of interpersonal relationships to deal with in that they are accountable to both their senior leaders, but also to other stakeholders such as their team members, pupils and parents (Bennet et al., 2007; Brundrett and Rhodes, 2011; Day, 2007). This position of being accountable, both to people above, people below has been described as the meat in the sandwich (Marshall, 2012; Scott et al., 2008). In schools, colleges and universities, staff inhabit more than one community of practice (Wenger, 1998), the intricacies of leadership and management being such that an individual may be a leader in one context, whilst a follower in another, and that it is important to acknowledge such complexities, and not use over simplistic definitions of leadership (Briggs and Coleman, 2007; Rittel and Webber, 1973), a view that is shared by Busher and Harris (2000) who describe this rather specific scenario as the 'complex matrix' of leadership.

There are two major tensions that can be identified that have the potential to impact on the way in which middle leaders define and carry out their duties:

- The tension between senior staff expectations that the middle leader will play a part in whole-school matters, and the perception amongst middle leaders that their first loyalty is to their department.
- The tension between developing a line-manager culture within the school, and a belief in collegiality

(Bennet et al., 2003)

The pressure to deliver higher standards has shifted the responsibility for delivery down the line. Distributed leadership is functionally downwards, with teaching and learning being measured through external means (Gunter, 2001), and middle leaders frequently find themselves in the uncomfortable position of being squeezed between the conflicting requirements of the senior leadership team and their departmental colleagues (Branson et al., 2016; Scott et al., 2008). Much of the research, however, indicates that most middle leaders view their main accountability being toward their teacher colleagues rather than to senior managers (Bush, 2003).

It has long been known that much human behaviour is neither logical, nor is it irrational, it is motivated by sentiment, thus there are many who, whilst highly intelligent and logical within their spheres of expertise, display poor judgement in the sphere of human relations (Roethlisberger, 1941). Friction and conflict between people at work is recognised, and manifests itself in an array of attitudes and behaviours. However, whilst we know that it exists, we are generally ill-equipped to manage workplace conflict effectively, our management tool-kit of responses being most usually seriously lacking (Masters and Albright, 2002). Friction between colleagues is not uncommon and, as has been observed by Schein (1992), leaders and managers may encounter what they consider to be confrontational behaviour amongst team members:

If we are managers who are trying to change the behaviour of subordinates, we often encounter resistance to change at a level that seems beyond reason. We observe departments in our organization that seem to be more interested in fighting with each other than getting the job done. We see communication problems and misunderstandings between group members that should not be occurring between

'reasonable' people. …the level of conflict between groups in organizations and in the community, is often astonishingly high. (p.4)

Whist this situation may be recognised by the reader, it is worth noting that difference and conflict are not inherently negative because, if managed correctly, it can contribute to the performance of teams (Jordan and Troth, 2004). It has been recorded that, whilst leaders often do collaborate, they do not necessarily do so not with all organisational members. Instead, leaders collaborate with their closest allies, people who also usually hold positions of leadership within the organisation (Jackson and Parry, 2011), and so whilst it is universally recognised that good quality teaching and learning lie at the heart of the middle leader's role, it also creates some of the most intractable problems, most specifically the tension between monitoring their team members, and collegiality (Bush, 2003).

2:13 The development of the middle leader

The stage of leadership where teachers are beginning to take on leadership and management responsibilities for the first time in areas that include heads of subject areas has been coined by Bush (2008) as 'emergent leadership' (not to be confused with the same term used by Northouse, (2016) when describing leaders who 'emerge' due to their influence over their peers), and there remains the long-held view in many countries that school head teachers and senior staff need only to be experienced teachers in order for them to take on formal leadership roles. However, the recognition is emerging that leadership is a parallel, or even separate profession that needs specific preparation (Bush, 2008; OECD, 2008). In a thoughtful text on the philosophy of leadership, Hodgkinson (1983) argues that a set of maxims form the key platform of knowledge on which the leader is able to affect: Know the task; Know the situation; Know the group; know oneself (Page 211), and as three of these four areas are context specific, it stands to reason that the most meaningful forms of leadership development are unlikely to be found outside the school; instead, a well-conceived school process is a particularly powerful way for school leaders to support teachers as they develop their leadership skills.

There has been a gradual shift in the role of the middle leader over the past fifteen years, from a focus on the head of department as the senior teacher who acts as a role model for their colleagues through an acceptance of the need to fulfil routine administrative and managerial tasks, through to a wider recognition of the need to lead a team of professional subject specialists, and the nature of middle leadership development needs to keep pace

with these fundamental changes, particularly as the leadership at this level is key to the quality of learning that takes place in the school. The professional life of school leaders is typically fast paced and unpredictable, with middle leaders in schools typically having only one or two hours per week for their role over and above the non-contact time, and as such it is probably unrealistic for them to be in a position to create a carefully planned programme of teacher leader development within their own school (Bush, 2003), a factor that may contribute to the paucity of training or development for the middle leader identified by Brundrett and Terrell (2004). A further obstacle to teacher leadership development that is frequently observed is that of the isolated professional culture that is common within schools. This means that there are fewer opportunities for teachers to provide leadership for their colleagues, and little motivation for teachers to further develop their own leadership capacities. Despite these challenges, schools should not lose sight of the point that leadership development is an important component of school improvement, that school improvement is about raising student achievement, and so improved leadership should promote, celebrate and enhance the importance of teaching and learning (Hopkins, 2003).

It is contended that, for a school subject leader to succeed, they need to be a leading professional and that there is a widespread belief amongst teachers that in order to lead a department, one needs to be a good teacher and that the most effective form of subject leadership is that of the 'leading professional', a person who is considered by the team members to be a model to be followed (Busher and Harris, 2000). Research has also shown that ineffective curriculum areas are mostly led by subject leaders who were not respected as expert practitioners (Harris, 1998). The position of subject middle leaders as leaders of an area of the whole school means that they operate at the interface between different levels, and sources of influence and change, so they find themselves simultaneously agents of the senior staff, and representative of their respective department. Middle leaders need, on a daily basis to address and resolve the tensions that are inherent in the matters of collegiality, authority and professionalism, and wide range of studies indicate that there are no neat solutions to situations that hold so many variables, and that successful leadership is driven by individual and collective value systems rather than bureaucratic and managerial concerns (Harris, 1998). To be an effective leader, people need to understand human nature and the motivations of individuals (Guskey, 2000), and because such values

are central to successful leadership, they must also be central to leadership development; rational models that focus on the development of behavioural skills and competencies are not sufficient (Day, 2003).

Leithwood et al. (2008) suggest that it is the effort required to meet the challenges of new assignments that produces the greatest growth in leadership capabilities, and this resonates with the assertion made by Church (2014); Conger (2003) Leithwood et al. (2003) that experience plays a significant part in the success of a leader, however Leithwood et al. (2008) also warn that without support, such challenges can have a debilitating effect on the leader. As such they advise that leaders are stretched, but provided with the support mechanisms to enable them to succeed.

Middle leadership in schools continues to go through a process of transition, and there is a growing recognition by middle leaders that they need to observe, monitor and evaluate the work of their teams. Bush (2003) recommends three changes that will further enhance this process of change:

- In the limited non-contact time that they have, middle leaders will need to focus further on teaching and learning as opposed to mundane administrative tasks. This will, however, need the support of head teachers and senior staff.
- Professional teachers must acknowledge that middle leaders need to observe, monitor and evaluate the work of their colleagues, and that this is neither threatening nor unprofessional.
- Middle leaders and their senior colleagues should understand the need for on-going professional development in order for them to remain at the leading edge in terms of both subject knowledge and team leadership.

Bush argues that, if these factors are facilitated by schools, then it has the potential to lead to a re-definition of the role of middle leaders, who will transform from routine managers to educational leaders.

2:14 A moral imperative?

There is a widespread consensus that not only does professional training and development have a positive impact on leaders, and that there is broad international agreement that effective leadership is an essential prerequisite for successful schools, but that the development of school leaders should be a deliberate act, and that it should be designed

to develop and enhance leadership skills and learning because strong leadership makes for good education in all respects (Bush, 2012; Brundrett and Terrell, 2004; OECD, 2008). Guskey (2000) notes that a consistent finding within research is that notable improvements in education almost never take place in the absence of professional development, observing that it is a prerequisite for all educational improvements. This body of opinion within the international education community is supported by literature from the commercial leadership sector which emphasises that a laissez-faire attitude towards leadership development is irresponsible (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2011). Arguably, there are other parallels between leadership in education and that within the business sector, particularly through the growth of 'responsible leadership' which shifts the goals of an organisation from an economic frame of thinking to a wider and more responsible frame. In education, there is a not dissimilar tension between an emphasis on student achievements and school outcomes to a broader view of education as a common good, thus challenging current positivistic, market-led views on education (Oplatka, 2017).

Because educational leadership is widely considered to an important factor in the success of learners, it is contended that, as teachers move from a classroom role to a leadership role, they should have the right to be developed appropriately. To expect individuals to take on leadership roles and manage other staff and care for children without any form of preparation is foolish to the point of reckless, as well as being manifestly unfair to the newly appointed incumbent, and so the development of school leaders should not be left to chance. Educational leadership is increasingly seen as being a quite different role to that of classroom teacher, and being qualified for the job of classroom teacher does not automatically make a person suitable for leadership (Bush, 2012). Bush reinforces this point by suggesting that if the model were followed by other careers, then nurses would become surgeons, and flight attendants would go on to be pilots. For these reasons, it is argued that there is a moral obligation to ensure that all leaders in education are suitably trained. There should be a deliberate process in place that is designed to produce the best possible leadership for schools (Bush, 2009; Bush, 2012). This leadership should be focussed on instructional improvement, the skills and knowledge that are relevant to school leadership at all levels should all be connected to, or lead directly to, the improvement of pupil performance (Crowther, 2009; Elmore, 2000; Martin et al., 2017). If the formal authority of the school requires that it holds its middle leaders responsible for the delivery of expected

outcomes, then the school has an equal and complementary responsibility to ensure that the middle leaders have the capacity to undertake this task (Elmore, 2000).

When it comes to the selection of potential candidates for leadership development, there are two possible lines that can be taken: Firstly, self-selection by candidates, and secondly a model of development that is planned by the organisation. The disadvantage of self-selection is that the candidates who step forward may not be the most suitable or the best qualified, nor may they best suit the school's needs, whilst the drawback of planned development is that pre-leadership role training is expensive, and a candidate may choose not to subsequently apply. By identifying and targeting potential leaders, programmes of development can help to shape initial school leadership practices, and build networks through which participants can share their concerns. Programmes should provide a combination of theoretical knowledge, practical application and self-reflection, and should be designed to fit within the broader picture of school leadership (Schleicher, 2012). This implies that potential leaders should be actively sought and identified by the organisation. The development of high-quality middle leaders has a number of potential advantages. First, improvement takes place through organised learning rather than through the idiosyncratic experimentation of individuals working alone, thus a programme based on empirical findings will enable middle leaders to learn from pre-established good practice (Elmore, 2000). Second, it increases the likelihood of them performing effectively in their role, and third it provides a pool of suitably trained people for advancement into more senior positions which provides a vehicle for succession planning that then makes for a more secure future for the organisation (Bush and Middlewood, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2001).

2:15 Can leadership be taught?

Stumpf (during interview with Doh, 2003) asks this question, and concludes that the answer is yes. He explains his answer by suggesting that the methods by which it is taught need to create an experience that is relevant to the student of leadership, and from which the student can learn. Stumpf describes leadership as a 'performance sport', one that requires both thinking and doing, in such a way that it satisfies the needs of a group of people who may have wide ranging expectations. Much of what is delivered as 'best practice' can only be best practice for a specific audience because leadership is context related. Stumpf concludes that what is taught as leadership needs to be learned in a personal, applicable way, and it is this that makes it appear that leadership can be learned, but that it is difficult

to teach. Bush (2009) points out that, because the range of leadership contexts and scenarios is so wide, there are no off the peg solutions to the question of leadership development, and that course designers need to find appropriate approaches for their specific groups of participants. This is a line of argument taken also by West-Burnham and Koren (2014) who contend that generic training activities are the least effective training vehicle for bringing about change in a person's thinking because they are the most remote from that person's daily experience. Further to this, Jackson and Parry (2011) argue that leaders cannot be trained per se, however, they believe that it is perfectly possible to develop particular behaviours and skills that can be used by individuals to lead others, whilst Papay and Kraft (2016) argue that, not only is leadership development in education attainable, but the school plays an important part in promoting (or indeed constraining) this growth.

Training is possible in interpersonal communication skills, presentation skills, decision making skills and facilitation skills; however, all these are a means to an end. This lends credence to the idea that leadership is the sum of the parts, and it is the individual components that can be developed rather than leadership as a holistic entity. It also links into the idea that we are all different because of our personal histories, and also that this may be behind the contextual aspect of leadership: each of us has the potential to be a good leader in specific environments. It is not only through formal courses that leadership can be learned, but through the observation of and interaction with colleagues through a community of practice (Danielson, 2016), thus enabling an organic and internal growth of leadership rather than one managed through external providers (Mitchell and Sackney, 2015).

2:16 The development of leadership

It has been reported that, despite the availability of appropriate training, many school leaders report that they have not been sufficiently trained to carry out their roles. Whilst the majority of candidates for leadership positions within schools have a background in teaching, there is often a gap in, for example, pedagogical innovation, financial acumen or managing other people. This gap can usually be filled once they are in post, and their responsibilities are clearly defined, supported by the clearly defined and specific training in the skills they need, However, the development of school leaders requires clearly defining their responsibilities, providing access to appropriate professional development

throughout their careers, and acknowledging their key role in improving school and student performance (OECD 2008; Schleicher, 2012). People learn in different ways (Parsloe and Leedham, 2009; Rogers and Horrocks, 2010), and there is broad acknowledgement that no single form of development will suit all people (Crowther, 2009). Perhaps the best way of finding out what they do need is simply to liaise with them and ask, because they are best placed to identify their requirements, and not only will this inform the provider, but will also better motivate the emergent leader if they feel that development is being tailored to meet their perceived needs, and so analysis of the needs of the emergent leader can help to inform the design of an appropriate leadership development programme (OECD, 2008). This said, the emergent leader may be unclear about their needs because they don't know what they don't know (Thorpe and Bennett-Powell, 2014),

Whilst undertaking research into how students acquire skills through formal instruction and practice at the University of California, in 1980, The brothers Dreyfus and Dreyfus proposed a model of skill learning that encompasses both explicit rule following and intuitive decision making. Drawing on a range of examples, they outline five stages of skill acquisition for adults: novice; advanced beginner; competent; proficient and expert. Their research picks out clear differences between the novice who has no sense of responsibility beyond following the rules, and who learns through instruction of context free elements, and context free rules, through to the expert who 'sees' or 'feels' solutions through their intuition which is based on tacit knowledge gained through extensive experience (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1980). This research has been substantiated by others over time who contend that much of the skill required for effective leadership is learned from experience rather than through formal training programmes (Carraccio, 2008; Marshall, 2012; West-Burnham and Koren, 2014; Yukl, 2010). This would suggest that the development of leadership as a skill or series of capabilities needs to be quite different during the formative stage than it would be when the leader has further experience on which they can reflect. It would also suggest that it is the acquisition of knowledge relevant to the role that would be the most productive area to consider developing in the earliest stages of a development programme, because perspective takes time and a well- developed sense of self awareness and reflection. West-Burnham and Koren (2014) talk of mental mindscapes or 'mental maps' that enable us to comprehend the world around us. These mental maps enable us to construct reality, and so each person's mental map will be different. Our mental maps

change over time as our experience grows, and for any learning to take place our internal mindscape has to change. The key challenge, the authors contest, is finding the most effective ways in which to change and develop the mind maps of those who move into leadership roles (see also Strange and Mumford, 2005).

Leaders' identities are constructed in part because of personal biographies, who they were, where they grew up, and what their formative influences where (Greenfield and Ribbins, 1993). The leader, in any situation, is a product of their own unique experience, and because the leader interfaces with their team, each member of which also has a unique heritage, it is argued that the leader needs an understanding or awareness of self in order to successfully engage with the team. This self-reflection is an essential component of all leadership development, and Parsloe and Leedham (2009) incorporate it into their leadership teaching. They make a number of key points in this area; First, self-reflection is the basis for learning to be a better leader, the participant in leadership development needs to dig deeply into their own experience of both leadership and followership. Second, learning comes from direct experience, and so the group becomes the primary source of leadership learning. Third, leadership theory is not only critically examined through the participant's personal experience, but also on ethical and moral grounds. Until a leader has a coherent appreciation of self-awareness and an understanding of their personal values, it is difficult for them to develop as leaders.

A study by Simkins et al. (2007) informs us as to the different reasons why middle leaders undertake and engagement in development programmes. For some, the primary emphasis is the in-school experience, the outcome being the implementation of a specific change within the school which would address a particular issue that had been identified. For others however, the learning journey was much more centred on the personal, the participants focussing more on what they were learning about themselves. Because leadership involves individuals working within specific contexts, a one size fits all programme of leadership development is not appropriate, and so consideration needs to be given to individualised learning (Bush, 2008), and it is of note that leadership development also has the potential for a significant impact on both the performance of the leader and on their career development (OECD, 2008; Simkins et al., 2007).

Fink (2010) argues that there are seven aspects of learning that will help define leadership: contextual knowledge; political acumen; emotional understanding; understanding

learning; critical thinking; making connections and futures thinking. He suggests that if leaders are to be developed who possess these capabilities, then leadership courses will need to be aligned with them. Jackson and Parry (2011) make the point that, in their view, it is not possible to *train* leaders. One can however work to develop the behaviours and skills necessary in order to lead others. One can teach interpersonal skills, communication skills, presentation skills, decision making skills and facilitation skill, and all of these will be helpful to the leader. However, there are many leaders who have got by without fully developing these skills, and so what matters more is the ability to keep reflecting on and learning from experiences (Hargreaves and Shirley, 2012). Therefore, a programme of development could readily give knowledge to the novice leader, thus developing this capability. Stumpf (during an interview with Doh, 2003) suggests that leadership can be taught, but only if the methods of teaching concentrate on creating meaningful experiences from which the student can learn. Leadership is a skill than not only requires thinking, but also requires doing, and to the satisfaction of others with diverse expectations. Management educators consulted by Doh (2003) generally agreed that leadership, from the perspective of personal qualities rather than professional ability, requires a particular type of education, and this education relies on heuristic approaches that may include mentoring, coaching, patterning or trial and error experiences. Bush (2009) observes that the facilitation of learning that is used extensively in the National College for School Leadership is one of often one of the widely-applauded components of such programmes, being particularly effective where the facilitators have specific knowledge of the contexts within which the participants work. He also contends that, despite the tendency to emphasise leadership learning from an individual perspective, group activities play a significant part in many development programmes.

Wilson and Xue (2013) contend that school leadership development needs to be consistent with the evidence from best international practice which they regard as: including the linking of leadership learning to school contexts and real problems; ensuring flexibility to meet diverse needs; providing multiple opportunities for sharing, reflecting, cohort bonding and networking in order to promote collaboration; recognising and respecting the existing skills, values and knowledge that leaders already possess and applying systems of meaningful evaluation. Guskey warns that there are harsh lessons to be learned from past practice, and as such, educators have come to realise that neither fragmented, piecemeal

approaches to professional development, nor one-shot workshops based on the latest educational fad, work. They recommend a number of steps to ensure the intentionality of professional development. First, the programme should begin with a clear statement of the purpose and goals, ensuring that the goals are worthwhile. Subsequently, the programme should determine that the goals can be assessed. They further suggest that it is unlikely that any single model will prove effective for all individuals in all circumstances. The appropriateness of any particular model will vary depending on the goals, the content and the context. Successful programmes of leadership development are woven into the fabric of everyday professional life rather than being separate from day to day responsibilities, and so in conclusion, they contend that successful programmes centre primarily on issues that are of direct relevance to the learner (Guskey, 2000).

Bush et al. (2007) identify four components that should underpin the design of leadership programmes:

- The learning environment: The most fruitful leadership development experiences take place where there is a clear link between the learning situation and the work situation, and where the participants have the opportunity to both reflect on their own practice, and subsequently share that practice with others.
- Learning styles: Successful adult learning would appear to grow from the identification of individualised learning needs.
- Learning approaches: The literature suggests that that a didactic approach to leadership development is only of limited value, and that active learning is much more productive.
- Learning support: In order to ensure effective support, facilitators and mentors need to be carefully matched. This needs to be followed up with on-going evaluation of the relationships involved in support.

(pp.381 – 382)

Bush and Glover (2004) advocate four main components to a leadership development programme: Networking, mentoring and coaching, work-based experiential learning and formal learning programmes. Hewes and Patterson (2012) have developed a three-pronged approach to their leadership development programme: workshops, coaching and peer learning. They use this system because of their contention that different people learn in different ways, and that in their experience experiential learning benefits the learning

process. Rajon's study of leadership in five hundred organisations showed that coaching and mentoring were ranked as the most valuable means of promoting leadership development (1996, cited in Bush and Middlewood, 2005), whilst Bush (2012) contends that mentoring is a particularly appropriate method for developing individualised learning. Learning about leadership through networks of professional communities of practice was seen to be particularly helpful in providing mutual peer support and in the exchanging of ideas on good practice and problem solving, such opportunities for experiential learning and participation in professional networks and communities of practice were greatly valued (Nicholson et al., 2016; Wilson and Xue, 2013).

This theme of 'no one size fits all' solutions to the development of leadership, noting that different approaches are needed to accommodate the range of individuals and the variety of contexts they find themselves in, is articulated by a number of researchers (Bush, 2009; Martin et al., 2014; Thorpe and Bennett-Powell, 2014). The road to leadership involves a range of appropriate skills, knowledge and the accumulation of wisdom over time and at different career stages, so that the complexity and diversity of a wide range of contexts can be addressed (OECD, 2008; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009). Finding the right balance between content and process, both for those who design the programme, and for those who experience it, is a very real challenge (Bush, 2008). There is clear consensus that leadership development needs to be contextualised to the environment within which the leader is working, and that a 'off the peg' approach to the subject is inappropriate. Leadership is built on a foundation of personal values, and so a purely rationalistic programme of development misses the point, and is unlikely to be effective. It is also clear that the organisation plays a key role in the support of the professional development of educational leaders (OECD, 20008; Papay and Kraft, 2016). Potential and current leaders are likely to engage with a development process either because they see it as a vehicle for school improvement, or because they perceive it as a vehicle for personal development; either way, it has the potential for career progression. In the next section, the researcher considers how these requirements may be realised through a programme of development.

It appears from this study of the literature that developing leadership through working within the conceptual parameters of the individual's context is a key component, and that individual mentoring and coaching are the most effective means by which change can be effected. These themes align both with the theories concerning stages of learning

propounded by Dreyfus and Dreyfus, and the theories of mind maps by West-Burnham and Koren. However, these theories need to be approached with an open mind for whilst the Dreyfus and Dreyfus model is accepted almost without debate by physicians, the temptation to oversimplify complex processes should be resisted (Gobet and Chassy, 2009; Peña, 2010).

2:17 Models of practice

There has been a trend towards the systematic preparation and development of school leaders which, whilst by no means universal, has advanced to the point where the argument is widely accepted. However, there is also an ongoing debate about the nature of such provision (Bush, 2008). Attempts to discover what models are used, and the level of success they enjoy is hazy, and here are three reasons why a review of models of leadership development has its limitations. First, providers tend to be cautious about how much information they will divulge regarding the content of their courses. This is perfectly understandable practice as it goes some way to preventing plagiarism. Second, whilst there are common factors to be found amongst the models researched, there is also a degree of variety, no doubt reflecting the views of the individual providers and their niche in the market place (also observed by Huber, 2004). Third, research into a provider that has run leadership courses over a long period (the National College for Teaching and Leadership for example) shows that the course content has evolved over time, and this would be expected for two reasons: First, the nature of education is such that it never stays still but is moving according to the views of the government of the day; the transfer of accountability from local authority to the individual school over a period of time is an example of this. Second, it should be expected that a subject area such as leadership will develop and improve over time according to the environment it is being performed within, and in the light of research findings and experience. In this section, the researcher captures a range of models gleaned over both time and space, looking for common factors, as well as those aspects that may be more relevant to the independent sector of education.

During 2003, in a study into middle leaders within schools, the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) reported that very few middle leaders appeared to have received any form of specific management or leadership training. If this is compared with the provision made by the National College in 2012 it becomes apparent that significant strides were made in this area over a ten-year period. During the autumn of 2012, the National College

reframed its Middle Leader Development Programme (MLDP), replacing it with the National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership (NPQML). The NPQML is aimed at teachers who have the responsibility of leading a team, including heads of departments and pastoral leaders. It is intended to support participants in their leadership skills, helping them develop the skills, confidence and knowledge needed to lead successful teams that will deliver improved classroom practice. The new qualification differs from that offered previously in that it is designed:

- To deal explicitly with the leadership and management of a team or department and is designed for those who have a clear remit at middle leader level.
- With a strong emphasis on the practical strategies needed to deliver effective performance in the issues of team leading of classroom practice.
- To provide access to a wide set of leadership resources that will challenge and inform participants.
- To require a significant commitment from the participant in terms of both time and learning activities.
- As a national qualification, the NPQML can be used as a component of Master's level study at a number of universities.

Participants need to complete two essential modules: Leading teaching, and managing systems and processes. Participants also need to complete a further, elective module, samples of which include: Leading inclusion; Achievement for all; Leading an effective team; Leading and developing staff; Succeeding in middle leadership; Leading change for improvement; Leading in a diverse system. Each of the three modules requires up to fifty hours of learning through a blend of workplace learning, face-to-face activity, reading, reflection and online learning. This qualification is a one of a suite of interconnected qualifications that progress from the NPQML through the National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL) to the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), and is an indication of how the development of school leadership has been taken seriously by successive governments during this period. The NPQML is run through nationally accredited providers, and all teachers in the maintained sector are eligible to apply. Teachers from within the independent education system may also apply and, whilst the cost of the course is the same as for state maintained schools and academies

at £998, there is a supplement of £225 for Independent and Overseas schools for the assessment (West Hertfordshire Teaching Schools Partnership website: January 2016).

The Independent sector has its own professional development arm, sponsored by the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference (HMC) and Girls' Schools Association (GSA), entitled HMC Professional Development (HMCPD), and this runs 45 courses through the year in a range of areas pertinent to the independent education sector. As part of this suite, it runs a three-stage course for middle leaders which:

Aims to provide middle leaders with the skills, knowledge and understanding that they need to become highly effective, and to improve the standards of teaching and learning in their department.

(HMCPD website, January 2016)

Level 1 is 'Preparing for Middle leadership' while Level 2 is 'Developing Middle Leaders', each being a component of the Independent School's Qualification in Academic Management (ISQAM), and are organised in partnership with the Institute of Education. These programmes are:

Year-long programmes designed to be followed consecutively and cover eight modules relating to the role of the Head of Department.

(HMCPD website, January 2016)

It is perhaps of note that the qualification is entitled 'Academic Management' which leads to two observations. Firstly, independent schools tend to sell themselves on a combination of academic results, extra-curricular activities and pastoral care, yet no mention of these is made. Such responsibilities are dealt with within the 45 courses that are run in total, however they do not lead to an accredited qualification. Secondly, although specifically pitched at middle leaders, the course is entitled 'Management'. A level 3 course is also offered, directly through the London Centre for Learning, Institute of Education. This course is two terms in duration (January to September), is assessed through two written papers (1 x 1500 words, 1 x 3500 words) and is designed to:

Provide you with the opportunity to reflect on your experiences on a LCLL/IOE programme or other situation, deepen your learning through further reading and make both personal and organisational recommendations for how leadership leads to institutional improvement within a changing educational policy context.

(London Centre for Leadership in Learning, Institute of Education. The Independent Study Module (ISM) – Leadership, January 2016.)

A study into leadership development provided through the National College for School Leadership (Simkins et al., 2007) showed that the Leading from the Middle (LftM) programmes embody a learning approach which is a combination of face-to-face provision, on line support and in-school activities. The programme begins with a 180-degree feedback questionnaire that is designed to explore aspects of the participant's leadership style. The results gleaned from these questionnaires are then used to support the participant's reflection on their learning needs, and give them focus for their in-school work. The core of the programme is a series of face-to-face sessions through Development Days, introducing key ideas about leadership and school change. These sessions are complemented by an on-line component that comprises of core leadership material, tools for diagnosing in-school situations, leadership simulation and an on-line community. The final element of the programme is an in-school Leadership Focus that is supported by a coach. The programme then ends with a presentation by the participant to their tutors, coach and fellow participants. The in-school component of the LftM is designed specifically to be a vehicle for participants to develop their leadership skills and capabilities through the implementation of an in-school change that is pertinent to their area of responsibility. It is expected that the nature of this focus should be determined at least as much by the needs of the participant as by the needs of the school.

An important aspect of the in-school component is the appointment of an in-school coach to support and guide the participant. This NCSL leadership programme operates simultaneously within two frames that reflect two different levels of outcome. The 'school improvement frame' emphasises the need for programmes to contribute to school performance, including teaching and learning. The 'leadership development frame' places emphasis on the development of the participant's leadership skills and capabilities in areas that may have been identified at the beginning of the development programme. Research by Simkins et al. (2007) evidenced these two frames in their study, finding that for some participants, the primary emphasis of the in-school component of the programme was the implementation of a particular change within the school (task outcome) whereas for other participants, whilst they took actions within the school context, for them the development programme was much more centred on themselves (personal outcome). This is a factor

that perhaps needs to be illuminated in the initial component of the development programme. What are a participant's motivation for taking part in a leadership development programme? Is it because they see it in the organisation's interest, or is it because they see it to be in their own interest. This may play a part in their approach to modules designed for the programme, and subsequent engagement in them.

On the international scene, provision is varied. Many countries face similar issues in the field of education, however cultural issues ensure that there is no standard way of providing leadership development opportunities, rather a wide range of possibilities that focus on differing contextual factors (OECD, 2008). In Denmark, leadership induction courses for teachers run for four weeks, whilst in other countries, the programme may run for up to three years. Regarding on-going leadership development training, in Finland, the requirement is three days per year, and in Hungary it is 120 hours every seven years. In Scotland, in order to undertake in-service training, teacher leaders must participate in an additional 35 hours of training per year, and maintain a record of their professional development activities (Schleicher, 2012).

Research across a range of countries found that the more effective leadership development programmes demonstrated the following qualities:

- They prepare school leaders using approaches that address the broader roles and responsibilities of leaders, and the purpose of schooling.
- The programmes are designed to produce leaders who work towards student centre schools, aiming for continuous improvement and the capacity for high performance.
- They assume a systems wide perspective in order that the programmes are aligned with the whole school goals of school improvement and student performance.

The OECD also concluded that best practice leadership development programmes usually included networking opportunities amongst participants which helps to foster collaborative problem-solving issues, and which can alleviate some of the isolation that can be felt. It was further noted that coaching and mentoring can have a place in such programmes because through the process of mentoring, newly appointed leaders can have access to the counsel of those who have greater experience within the school (OECD, 2008). Earley and Weindling (2004) observe that examples of good leadership development

practice from around the world include mentoring and coaching, learning theories, problem based learning, case studies, reflection, story-telling and drama, e learning, journals and learning communities.

Jackson and Parry (2011) design leadership programmes that bring together a blend of approaches that allow for the differing learning preferences of the participants, and which are designed to keep the process dynamic and the participants engaged. Experience in this field has shown success through a combination of short lecturettes, small-group and large-group discussions, along with experiential exercises, case studies and role-modelling work with a wide range of audiences. They use case studies presented in a variety of media, but find that these are most effective when they are directly relevant to the participant's experience, using a process whereby the case studies are discussed initially in small groups, and then evaluated in larger groups. They recommend role modelling which involves guest speakers who can encompass role playing in a range of leadership situations. They believe that a key component to be fostered in leadership development is the emotional aspect – how a leader *feels* about leading. Their experience would indicate that when leadership fails, it is often not attributable to cognitive (knowing how to lead) or behavioural (acting the role) but down to emotional issues, and whether the leader has the emotional toughness or resilience to cope with the difficult and personally challenging times. It is contended that this aspect of leadership is under represented, but important because emotionally intelligent and strong leaders will be able to better adapt to a range of differing situations, and will better understand the emotional needs of their followers. In addition, through strong self-regulation, emotionally intelligent leaders are better placed to maintain a positive frame of mind even when those around them have strong negative feelings about the same situation.

Hewes and Patterson use an integrated approach of workshops that incorporate coaching and peer learning. They contend that whilst it is desirable to use a different set of approaches because individuals learn in different ways, it can be difficult to combine such approaches into a cohesive whole. Their workshops create a group dynamic, being facilitated by a coach who encourages a highly interactive programme. The coaching element enables the programme to be tailored to the specific needs of the individual, with the coach helping the participant to apply the leadership programme to their specific context. Peer learning allows the participants to meet in a forum in which they are able to

discuss common issues and share their experiences and practices. Through this process they build collaborative relationships and networks. The integrated approach adopts the following programme outline:

- The coach introduces programme framework and leadership theory, leading discussion that encourages active learning.

- Participants work in peer groups on an exercise. This is followed by a debrief that, with the assistance of coaching, has each participant identify a specific time and place for them to apply their learning.

- In a follow-up workshop, the participants develop the application for their learned technique.

- The process is then tied back to the start in that at the beginning of each session, there is an allotted time for each participant to discuss the application of their idea in practice and discuss the successes and challenges they have met with both their peer and their coach.

This programme runs for seven months with five full day workshops, one every six weeks. There are twelve participants, each has a coach, and each receives 360-degree feedback. In conjunction with their coach, each participant creates a customised development plan that is built around an identified need, and which focuses on two or three specific goals. The authors contend that the group dynamic builds up over time during the workshops, and through this dynamic, individuals look to each other for advice as they work through the issues that are important to them. At the end of each workshop, the participants identify what they have learned, and make a commitment to the other members of the group as to what they will achieve before the next meeting. This has the effect of not only ensuring that each participant puts together sound, complete goals, but also that they fulfil them, because no participant will want to turn up at a meeting with nothing prepared, and it is at the commencement of each workshop that progress against goals is publicly aired (Hewes and Patterson, 2012).

Coldwell and Simkins undertook a review and critique into models of professional development and concluded that it is a complex task, one which requires a range of approaches, a single model not being sufficient. They noted that, as they gathered data, the ways in which the participants and other actors constructed their own mental models of what the programmes were about, not only did they differ from each other, but also

sometimes from the mental model of the programme designers. This could lead to engagement in ways that was inconsistent with the objectives of the programme instigator (Coldwell and Simkins, 2010). The changes sought in the individual must, however, be aligned with the overall culture because if the changes made at the individual level are not supported and encouraged by the organisation, then even the most promising innovation will fail (Sparks, 1996).

This review of the various models above shows that there is a range of common factors across them. These are:

- Self-reflection
- E-Learning
- Mentoring
- Coaching
- In-school work
- Practical strategies
- Problem based activities
- Case studies
- Networking

These factors or components can be grouped together in four themes. First, there are those parts of a leadership development programme that can be undertaken by the participant leader individually, and these are self-reflection and E-learning; neither of these parts need the involvement of a third person. Second, there are the parts that can be undertaken on a 1:1 basis, and these are coaching and mentoring. Both require another party, and ideally someone with a degree of knowledge and experience of the coaching and/or mentoring processes (Breaux, 2016). Third, there are those parts that can be developed as part of a close group, such as within the participant's own school, and these are: in-school work; practical strategies; problem based scenarios and case studies. Each of these overlapping parts needs the input of a third party to set up or organise, but each can be undertaken within a small group of people. Finally, networking implies lifting one's sights outside the boundaries of one's own environment, and becoming involved with like-minded people (or at least those with a similar interest) in other schools or organisations (Higher Education Institutions for example). These four clusters of: personal; 1:1; school based and wider networking are the distillation of the differing programmes reviewed above. They are

important, because when they are combined with the findings and subsequent analysis of this research, then clear conclusions can be drawn as to what should be included in a development programme, and how it may be best delivered. Leadership development is a process that is intentional, ongoing, and systematic. It is a deliberate process, one which is guided by a clear vision and planned goals. It is these goals that form the criteria by which the content and materials are selected, the processes and procedures developed, and assessments and evaluations prepared (Guskey, 2000).

2:18 Evaluation of development programmes

Evaluation is effective when the development activity has a clear, pre-defined outcome and a suitable method for collecting evidence of its impact, however it is not good when such factors are not built in at the planning stage (Office for Standards in Education, 2006). It is generally recognised that the assessment of leadership programmes is not an easy task (Coldwell and Simkins, 2010; Guskey, 2000; Hannum et al, 2007), and there are a number of reasons for this:

- Outcomes are complex and difficult to specify in simple terms. The programme may include unforeseen or unintended consequences.

- The most important effects may be indirect, occurring through the leader's influence on others who subsequently have an impact on final outcomes.

- Effects may take significant time to become apparent.

- Outcomes of specific in-school projects may be influenced by a range of variables.

- It may be difficult to separate out any impact directly attributable to the leadership development programme from the background 'noise' of the general school environment.

Simkins et al. (2007)

A model that is widely used in the business community is one which was first propounded by Kirkpatrick in 1959, and which sets out four levels of outcomes for interventions: (i) participants' reactions; (ii) participants' learning; (iii) changes in participants' behaviour; (iv) desired results. This straightforward model has been extensively used over a long period, such that Kirkpatrick claims that the widespread use of his approach is the main evidence for its validity (Kirkpatrick, 1998). Although this has proved to be a popular tool, Guskey (2000) argues that, all too often, development evaluations are too shallow, being

limited to the participants' enjoyment of the experience (level 1), and thus limiting the level of deep and meaningful feedback that informs professional development.

Bush (2009) reports that the evaluation of leadership development programmes may well take place, however the approaches employed are often subject to two limitations:

- They depend either largely or entirely on evidence provided by the participant who are asked to comment on their experience, and less frequently, the impact on the school. This approach is not subject to corroboration by a third party, and so is inherently flawed because it is a subjective view.
- The evaluation is most usually short term, participants' reports being sought during and/or immediately at the end of the development programme. It is widely recognised that any impact of such activities takes time, and it is most unlikely that any significant change in leadership practice will have taken place during the period of the training programme.

It is further suggested that, even if these two pitfalls are avoided, there remains the problem, from a research perspective, of attributing any beneficial effects to the development programme because it is not possible to isolate influences of the programme from other contemporaneous events that could also affect change. That said, Bush argues that if the two issues identified above are ironed out, then whilst the results may not be totally reliable, they would be more credible than would otherwise be the case.

Simkins et al. (2007) set out to refine models produced by Leithwood and Levin (2005) on the effects of leadership development within schools on pupil learning. Their study proposes identification of the effects of leadership development programmes through a series of intermediate outcomes leading to final outcomes. The three primary Intermediate Outcomes proposed are:

- Changes in the participant's learning and personal development.
- Changes in the participant's behaviour.
- Specific projects or actions that participants engage in as a part of the development programme.

The three primary Final Outcomes proposed by the study are:

- Changes in pupil characteristics, for example - behaviour, learning, attainment.
- Changes in the school's culture.

- Participant's career progression.

The authors of this study go on to identify a salutary lesson when they point out that school improvement is less about large scale change, but more about creating visible small wins. The complexity of outcomes of leadership development programmes needs to be acknowledged. Whilst the aim of all activity within schools, including leadership development programmes, is improved outcomes for the pupils, the way in which such programmes contribute to such programmes can be difficult to map (Simpkins et al., 2007). The identification of clear goals should enable training to be designed to align with strategic development (Getha-Taylor and Morse, 2012), a view echoed by Guskey (2000), and it is suggested that the views of participants can be triangulated through inviting opinions from colleagues within the school context who are in a position to observe changes in practice (Bush, 2009). Leading from the Middle cases demonstrate how programmes can contribute to the enhancement of schools' capacity through their contribution to effective CPD strategies that subsequently enable synergy to be developed through the individual leadership development experiences. These developments then feed into, and enhance the potential for, future growth in distributed leadership. A factor in the success or otherwise of programmes, is the motivations of the participants themselves, and the way in which they approach the experience. Some participants see programmes as a step on the road to promotion, whilst others see it as an opportunity to take stock and decide whether they want to become leaders (Caldwell and Simkins, 2010). A further potential impediment in the successful evaluation of a development scheme is the maturation of people as the programme progresses; people are always changing and developing even when not explicitly involved in development programmes (Craig and Hannum, 2007). It appears then that whilst looking for evidence that a leadership development programme can contribute to the learning of young people, it is difficult to map, and the research would suggest that outcomes may take place over a longer period than can be readily measured (Simkins et al., 2007).

Whilst the literature makes it clear that evaluation of leadership development programmes is a difficult task, there is clearly the potential for leadership development, as long as teacher leaders are supplied with detailed feedback on how to improve their practice (Papay and Johnson, 2012), although it is also argued that an evaluation process which is based on numbers, ratings and rankings may undermine the very professionalism it is trying to enhance (Danielson, 2016). It would appear that the further away from the original

programme, the more difficult it is to isolate and specify positive outcomes, partly because of the longer period variables have to impact, and partly because it is unlikely that the participant themselves remains static in terms of their own experience and development. In the final analysis, it is notoriously difficult to tell whether poor outcomes are the result of a poorly designed programme or factors that lie outside the programme itself (Coldwell and Simkins, 2010), as such, it is contended that evaluation should not be used as the main engine of improvement, but instead leadership development should be an integral part of a school's ethos of being a community of practice for all (Danielson, 2016).

2:19 A series of propositions

The locus of the literature review has been tautly bound to the research question which is: *Can effective support mechanisms be identified for those in the formative stages of middle leadership in the secondary independent education sector*? This precisely defined area of enquiry has enabled the researcher to build up a clear picture of the subject of middle leadership within schools as it is currently understood, and it is from this picture that the researcher has been able to make a series of propositions upon which he can construct his own research phase of the study. The use of propositions is recommended by Thomas, (2011), who propounds the use of 'temporary conceptual tools' in order to test ideas out. These temporary theories can be supported, adapted or refuted by the research they are used for but, whichever of these occurs, they give direction to the research rather than allowing it to stumble on in the dark. The researcher had two specific purposes behind the use of the propositions. First, he wanted a structure or framework within which he could undertake his research programme. This would enable interview questions to tie directly back to the research question. Second, he wanted to demonstrate a clear link between the literature review and the investigative stage of the study in order that an outside observer could see clearly how the research question, literature review, investigative stage and subsequent findings all linked together in a manner that is auditable and accountable (Walliman, 2011; Yin, 2009). The propositions that were drawn up are as follows:

Proposition I: Middle leadership is important to the school.

Proposition II: There are specific capabilities that are needed by middle leaders.

Proposition III: The capabilities required for leadership within a school context are not necessarily the same as those needed by the classroom teacher. There is an identifiable 'capability gap'.

Proposition IV: A programme of support for leaders in their formative period has the potential to bridge some of the capabilities gap.

Proposition V: Such a programme has the potential to benefit the individual, the sub unit (e.g. department) and the whole school.

The following section of this dissertation discusses each of the propositions individually and at length, during which the researcher draws on his own experience as both a classroom practitioner and an experienced leader in order to inform the propositions as they are drawn out of the literature review.

Proposition I: Middle leadership is important to the school

The researcher began the process of recording suggested propositions into his journal, and his first attempt at this process is recorded thus: *Proposition I: Strong leadership makes for good education* (Researcher's Journal, 3rd January 2013). By the end of May, and after much further reading, this proposition had evolved into *Middle leadership is important to the school* (Researcher's Journal, 30th May, 2013). By the term 'middle leadership' the researcher encompasses those who are not head teachers or deputies, but nor are classroom teachers only (Busher et al., 2007). They are those such as heads of subject departments or pastoral leaders. The researcher chose to use the wider term 'school' rather than 'learner' because whilst the individual pupil is the prime beneficiary of the education process, there are benefits to be had by parents, employees and the wider community, Thus the assertion is made that middle leadership is important to the whole school community, and not just the pupils in the classroom. The reason for taking this as a starting point was largely due to the contention that the effects of leadership on student learning are second only to the effects of the quality of the curriculum and of the teacher's instruction (Bush, 2008; Leithwood and Riehl, 2003). It seemed to the researcher that an endorsement of this often repeated and seemingly uncontended assertion would be key to the work that followed, because if middle leadership is not deemed to be of importance within the context of the case, then there is little point in going to the effort of finding out what the needs of middle leaders are, and how they may subsequently be supported. Because middle leadership is held amongst those who are not within the senior leadership team, but who have a greater level of administrative responsibility than the classroom teacher (Bush, 2003), and are the product of a distribution of leadership within schools because schools have become too complex for one person to lead and manage single-

handedly (Brundrett, 1999; OECD, 2008), they are very much at the cross roads within the school, working to drive forward the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility. They are the custodians of curriculum knowledge, they both develop and hold accountable the staff within their team and, through collaboration with fellow middle leaders and they influence the whole school (Busher and Harris, 2000; Toop, 2013).

Proposition II: There are specific capabilities needed by middle leaders

The literature makes it clear that 'leader', 'leading' and 'leadership' are contested concepts which are notoriously difficult to pin down with definitions, possibly because they are prone to three significant variables: the individual who would lead; the people who would follow; the context within which they all perform. It is also argued that 'scientific' methods of analysis as we currently understand them are unsuitable approaches because, as tools for observation and understanding, they are not suitable for the phenomena we are trying to observe (Carrol et al., 2008; Grint, 2005). The concept of 'skills' or 'capabilities' or 'competencies' is a knotty one in that a number of authors argue that leadership is too finely grained to be open to a broad categorisation of 'competencies' (Carroll et al., 2008; English, 2003), whilst the alternative, which is that of not attempting to create labels, leads to fuzziness and obfuscation.

In accepting that there is a need to label the 'things' that leaders need in order to lead, there is consistency amongst a number of researchers in grouping the competencies of leaders into three broad areas: those skills which can be learned quickly, those perspectives that are assimilated through experience over a period of time and those personal traits that we each have which are 'fixed' by our genes or early life experiences (Church, 2014; Doh, 2003; Leithwood, 2003). Is it possible to identify a series of skills perspectives and traits that are generic hall marks of good leaders? Both Terrell and Leask (1997) and Leithwood et al. (1999) undertook studies that in essence asked teachers in schools what they considered to be desirable qualities of good leaders, and there was significant overlap between the two studies. Some of the desirable qualities could be categorised as 'skills' (listen to staff; celebrate the achievement of others), some as perspectives (have clear direction; will admit to a lack of knowledge) whilst a relatively small proportion were more likely to be influenced by traits (strong moral values; are charismatic). The suggestion is then that, whilst nuanced and dependent on both the individual and the context, there are indeed particular capabilities that are required by middle leaders, and so this proposition

sets the researcher in the direction of ascertaining what some of these might be, and whether they align with the literature.

Proposition III: The capabilities required for leadership within a school context are not necessarily the same as those needed by the classroom teacher. There is an identifiable 'capability gap'

If, after due diligence, the research does support the proposition that there are capabilities required by middle leaders, it appears logical to the researcher to ask the question whether there is a difference between these capabilities and those required by the classroom teacher. Classroom teachers are leaders and managers of young people and so it is reasonable to assume that there will be significant overlap between capabilities required by a classroom teacher and their head of department, and the examples given above (listen to staff; celebrate the achievement of others; have clear direction; admit to a lack of knowledge; have strong moral values; are charismatic) are by and large desirable qualities to be found in any classroom teacher. However, as Bush illustrates, if the career path that teachers take into leadership were followed in other careers, then nurses would become surgeons, and flight attendants would become pilots (2012), and because the locus of accountability and leadership has moved over a period of time from local authority to school head to departmental heads, the demands on, and so the capabilities required of middle leaders has also evolved significantly.

Whilst this proposition focuses on the middle leader as an individual, schools are a complex organism of interlinking communities with flexible boundaries (Busher and Harris, 2000), and many teachers will be members of more than one community (Wenger, 1998). Middle leaders thus need to deal with a complex set of interpersonal relationships that include the pupils, their team members, their peers, their line managers and the senior leadership and the parents (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2011; Busher and Harris, 2000). This suggests that the capabilities required are wider and richer than simply those that focus on their departmental members, and so the researcher suggests that, whilst there may be overlap between the capabilities required of a classroom teacher and those required of a middle leader, there are also differences, and an objective of the study is to see whether such differences can be identified in the case.

Proposition IV: A programme of support for leaders in their formative period has the potential to bridge some of the capabilities gap

It has been shown through the review of the literature that leadership is important to the success of learning within schools (Bush, 2008; Leithwood and Riehl, 2003), although it is of note that most of the research into school leadership is in the area of senior leadership, and some of the seminal research into middle-leadership has been undertaken within higher education (i.e. Branson et al., 2016). It also appears clear from the literature that the capabilities needed for the middle leader within a school are different to those required of a classroom teacher (OECD, 2008). It is argued that, if leadership is important to the learners, but different to teaching, then there is a moral imperative to provide training or development opportunities for those who would lead, and for those who are leaders as part of their on-going professional development (Bush, 2012). This need to proactively develop leaders within education is something that has been recognised by many nations across the globe, (Brundrett and Crawford, 2008), although how this is realised in actuality varies from country to country, and depends on national, regional and local contexts (OECD, 2008).

Such development opportunities have been provided to the maintained sector in England through the National College for Teaching and Leadership for some years, and the provision has evolved over a period of time to the point where a nationally accredited qualification can now be gained. The independent sector also provides a middle-leadership development programme, however it can be argued that, because there is so little recorded study into leadership within the independent sector (Harvey, 2007; Harvey, 2015), such a programme must be based on anecdotal experience rather than empirical research. The suggestion is then, that if empirical research is available for the needs of middle-leaders, particularly during the early period of appointment, then these findings can be used to inform middle-leadership development programmes.

Proposition V: Such a programme has the potential to benefit the individual, the sub unit (e.g. department) and the whole school

This proposition is potentially the most difficult to verify because of the limitations of evaluation on leadership development programmes (Bush, 2009; Lumby et al., 2008; Simkins, 2007). Obstacles to the effectiveness of evaluation include: the quality of the evidence submitted; the immediacy of the evidence (usually shortly after the programme

has taken place); unforeseen consequences; variables outside the control of the researcher; difficulty of separating background 'noise' of the general school environment from that of a development programme. However, the researcher suggests that so many agencies in such a large number of countries are unlikely to be chasing a myth, and that proactive leadership development which focusses on those capabilities that are different to those needed by the classroom teacher can make a difference. It is to be remembered that, ultimately, the purpose of schools is to educate the individual child. The quality of leadership is linked directly to the quality of output, and so the development of leadership both during the formative period of the leader's incumbency, and throughout their leadership career has the potential for significant impact on learning.

2:20 Summary

There is an acknowledged link between the quality of school leadership and the quality of learning that takes place by pupils, and the successful development of leaders in education is a subject that challenges national governments across the globe. Leadership is a complex and multifaceted subject, and teacher leadership in particular is a relatively new concept which is, as yet, poorly understood, with empirical research into middle leadership notably sparse. In the UK, the independent sector educates over 7% of children, however there is virtually no empirical research into the leadership that takes place within them, and thus this is then a blank spot for research. Because of this sparsity of empirical research into middle leadership within the English secondary education sector, the researcher has, where appropriate, used examples of similar or parallel contexts from around the world, and whilst this study does not have the capacity to show how multifaceted and varied the solutions are, it has demonstrated that national, regional, and individual school contexts have an impact on the way in which leadership development is managed.

The researcher began the review of the literature by enquiring into the subject of leadership in its widest forms before homing in on the context of education in general and middle leadership in schools in particular. Whilst there is a paucity of empirical research into middle leadership in educational contexts, that which exists identifies the particular aspect of being accountable to those above, below and to the side. The degree to which leadership success is dependent upon personal traits or learnable skills remains open to contention. A number of researchers identify three groups of capabilities required by a leader: skills, perspectives and disposition, and linking this in to the research into skills

acquisition it can be argued that the initial stages of learning a new skill such as leading will be analytical until experience is built up which the leader can draw on and so build a larger 'perspective' portfolio which allows them to operate in non-analytical ways, so making decisions swiftly and instinctively. If this is the case, then there is an argument for approaching leadership development in different ways depending whereabouts the learner is along the learning process.

The different strands of literature point to there being different stages of skill development along a continuum that is the leadership development journey. It is the researcher's contention that a key point on this journey is during the earliest stages of leadership when, during this transitional period, the newly appointed leader encounters situations that they have not previously experienced. and this is for a number of reasons: First, this is the time during which any person learning any skill needs the most support, whether learning to ride a bike or play chess, and this knowledge is much more easily and quickly gained if taught by an expert, rather than (as is not unusual in the case of leadership) being left to the novice leader's trial and error building of experience. Second, leadership development is easier to deliver at this stage because what the novice leader needs most is explicit knowledge because they may have no prior experience on which to draw. Third, and perhaps most importantly, the more quickly a leader can be inculcated into the role, the more effective they should be, and this should be to the benefit if their team, the school, and most importantly of all, the learners.

The climate for research into educational leadership is particularly buoyant, and the recognition that high quality leadership is central to outcomes by learners has led to the view that the training and development of leaders in the knowledge, skills and understanding is desirable if educational organisations are to thrive in an increasingly global economy. However, there is the perception that there is a gap between the theory and the practice of educational leadership, and it is suggested that more work is needed to provide explanations of meaningful explanations of practice that can construct robust theories of educational leadership, thus helping to guide school based practice. Through this interrogation of pertinent literature which has been repeatedly benchmarked against the original question, a series of propositions or 'temporary theories' (Thomas, 2011) was formulated. These five propositions enabled the researcher to approach the interview

stage of the study with a set of questions, each of which was linked to at least one of the propositions.

The next stage of the study discusses the methodology and research design, taking the literature reviewed thus far to provide a significant part of the foundation on which the research design is subsequently built. Throughout the next chapter, the researcher not only continues to benchmark his research design against the original question, but he also ties it into the literature.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3:1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher demonstrates that he has a sound understanding of both his subject and the tools with which he has chosen to investigate it, linking theory to approach, and showing how his methodology and methods are selected to ensure that the evidence obtained enables him to answer the original question as unambiguously as possible (de Vaus, 2001). To be persuasive, his study should have a methodological consistency that runs throughout the piece. The relationship between the research questions and the literature review is methodology; the relationship of literature review to interview questions is methodology; the relationship of the interview transcriptions to the analysis of data is a methodological concern, and the relationship framework for analysis to the research report is methodological (Clough and Nutbrown, 2012). His research design then proceeds from a clear understanding of the question that the study is addressing and this is emphasised in the research question:

Can effective support mechanisms be identified for those in the formative stages of middle leadership in the secondary independent sector?

The first six weeks of the study were spent fine tuning this question, giving careful thought and consideration to each part of it. The researcher knew from experience of Master's level research that a clearly defined research question is a key component of a successful study, and so due diligence was applied at this stage. The research question has been referred to throughout the study and has guided the researcher through the literature review, the interview schedule, coding and the subsequent analysis, remaining a constant and consistent foundation as the study has progressed. This approach follows the advice of Saldaña (2013), who recommends that researchers should have a clear and strategic focus to their research. Thus, the researcher has returned to the research question on a regular basis, testing different parts of the study against it and he has found that it has served him well, and at no stage has he been tempted to change or adapt it. The research question can be split into three components: Teachers in the early stages of an appointment to middle leadership; support mechanisms for them that are effective; the secondary independent sector of education. The research question then specifies exactly what is to be investigated; it is not a broad or ill-defined goal. The research question gives the researcher the latitude

to ask two fundamental social science questions: what is going on (a description) and why is it happening (an explanation). If it is good descriptive research, it will tend to lead to explanatory research because, if the researcher is able to understand clearly what is happening, he will instinctively want to know why it is happening.

The researcher then needs to consider how he proposes to develop his study. From an analytical frame, will the researcher build up a set of ideas from scratch, or will he test ideas that have come from elsewhere? (de Vaus, 2001). Walliman (2011) suggests that research can be divided into two fields: inductive research in which the researcher observes and then theorises, and deductive research which involves theory by intellectual means, theory that is then tested through observation. The researcher suggests that his study will be inductive in that, because of the lack of previous research in the area, he will need to observe before he can begin to develop a theory. Denscombe (2010) suggests that there are three different types of purpose for a research study: Descriptive - what is going on; Explanatory - building on well-established theories in order to explain why things are happening; Exploratory - an investigation into new areas that seeks to generate new theories and concepts. At the beginning of the study, it was anticipated that the study would be both exploratory and explanatory. Exploratory because, in the initial stages the researcher was faced with an issue that fascinates him and about which he wants to learn more, explanatory in that he aims to get a good understanding of the needs of those newly appointed to middle leader positions. Arguably this is largely dependent on two factors: Firstly, a combination of what he finds in the descriptive and explanatory stage of his study, and secondly what he can elicit from the literature in the way of ideas that currently exist. Because the first part of the study is exploratory in that it effectively rummages around the themes contained within the research question to see what turns up, the researcher builds a theory – that is, he forms the shape of the theory from the data that is produced through the interview stage. The researcher's mind is open to new ideas or interpretations during this stage, and it is expected that the theory should become consolidated through the more productive ideas that are produced.

3:2 Why undertake this research?

'There is a simple question that every researcher needs to confront: Why bother doing the research?' (Denscombe, 2002), and Thomas (2011) also invites the researcher to ask themselves the question 'Why am I doing this study?' For the researcher, the research

question demands that the study needs relevance, seeking a clear idea of how this work fits into and is moulded by the context of the ideas and practices within which it takes place. It should have a practical need and ideally help others, engaging with the personal agenda of the researcher; problems do not exist in a vacuum (Denscombe, 2002). However, whilst research can be 'instrumental' – as a means to something else, or 'intrinsic' – for the study's own sake (Stake, 2005: cited in Thomas, 2011), the researcher finds that his purpose is more layered and complex than this bi-polar model would suggest. As the researcher has progressed through the study, he has come to understand that these two standpoints are not mutually exclusive; they are not an either-or. For the self-funded researcher, there almost certainly has to be an intrinsic element, perhaps driven by a personal motivation, however there also needs to be the hope that the end result will be of use to the wider community. Kvale and Brinkman (2009) question the legitimacy of whether a study is 'scientific', suggesting that this has been replaced by the pragmatic question of whether it provides useful knowledge, arguing that 'Good research is research that works' (p.56).

Thomas (2011) suggests that there are perhaps three reasons for choosing an area of study or subject: because the researcher knows a great deal about it (local); because it provides a particularly good example of a phenomenon (key); because it is different from the norm (outlier). Of these definitions, the researcher would suggest that that the subject of his research is local, because leadership and adult training/development are areas that he has specific knowledge of and interest in. Denscombe (2010) notes a word of caution about conducting research with the intention of benefitting the subjects involved because it 'might appear to violate the conventional wisdom that researchers should be detached, impartial and dispassionate' (p.12), however the researcher suspects that he might have an issue with detachment from a study that he is an integral part of. The researcher then, is studying phenomena that are closely connected to his professional work; he is undertaking research that is both intrinsic and instrumental, with the aspiration of using the findings of his work to help teachers when they are first appointed into positions of leadership.

3:3 What makes the study original?

A blank spot in research is a shortcoming, whilst a blind spot is an area that has been overlooked due to theoretical and epistemological bias (Gough, 2002), and there is a blank spot in our defining of quite what forms of leadership practice contribute to sustained

school improvement (Harris: cited in Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009). Perhaps more tellingly for this study, Harris offers the view that a key blank spot is the fact that much of the research literature is focussed on the formal leadership of head teachers, and that the kinds of leadership that can be distributed across many roles within the school has been overlooked. This view is supported by Thorpe and Bennett-Powell (2014) who observe that, whilst the field of research into educational research is relatively well served through studies into senior leadership, far less is written about the area of middle leadership, and the researcher's review of the literature would confirm this view – there really is very little out there. A second blank spot that is addressed by this study is the lack of previous empirical study into leadership in the independent sector, an area into which no research has yet been taken (Harvey, 2007 & 2015). The researcher then is setting out to investigate an area in which there is not currently a well-developed body of theory and as such is undertaking an exploratory research design. This design is based on the need to map out a new area, to provide descriptive materials about the area of study, and to explore the new area. Notably, because there has been relatively little work previously undertaken in this area, there is a lack of theory on which to build (Denscombe, 2010).

Blaxter et al. (2001) ask the question 'Will the work be original?' They give a series of definitions, based on the work of Phillips and Pugh (2000: cited in Blaxter et al., 2001). These definitions include: carrying out empirical work that hasn't been carried out before; setting down a major piece of new information in writing for the first time; making a synthesis that has not been made before. The researcher intends to show through this thesis that he has attained each of these to some degree, culminating in a further definition cited by Phillips and Pugh: that of adding to knowledge in a way that hasn't been done before. In this, the researcher's work is less about searching for the truth, and more about reducing our ignorance in the area he is choosing to study (Gough, 2002).

3:4 Philosophical foundations - ontology

In this and the subsequent section on epistemology, the researcher considers the methodological standpoints that are relevant to his study. This is not the place for an extended essay that pools together a wide range of ideas culled from well-known texts on the shelves of the university library. Rather it aims to bring together critically analysed and relevant theories of our understanding of knowledge in order to give the reader an understanding of the researcher's ontological and epistemological position. Philosophical

foundations need to be relevant to the research because a sound interplay between philosophical ideas and empirical work enables informed reflection without which, the label 'research' becomes questionable. Without reference to philosophical ideas, any ambition to determine 'how things are' or 'how best to interpret a phenomenon' in a particular situation may be regarded as illusory, and so bring into question the researcher's claim to authority (Alvesson and Skoldber, 2000; Compton and Jansen, 1990). The researcher does not set out to lift techniques from other accounts and import them uncritically into his own work, but aims to show how he has adopted stances that are appropriate to his work (Clough and Nutbrown, 2012), hence in presenting this piece of research, the researcher recognises the need to begin right at the beginning with a full discussion of positionality (Thomas, 2009).

Quine (1948) summed up his view of ontology by stating that the curious simplicity of the ontological problem is that it can be described in three monosyllables: 'What is there?' Notwithstanding the nihilist's response - 'nothing' - Quine's answer to his own question was 'everything'. At an irreducible level, an entity that can be observed is a 'thing', that is something which exists as an object of perception, knowledge or thought which is distinguished from a word by which it is represented. It is reasonable to assume that, during the course of the study, the researcher is likely to observe a large number of 'things', either first hand through his own observation, or second hand through discussion with participants. However, a thing as an entity is of little use in constructing ideas or communicating it to an audience unless it is given a name. We might call a thing 'chicken' or we might call it 'teacher' or we might call it 'integrity' in which case the thing becomes an object or a phenomenon. (The researcher could choose to use either of these words because they have very similar meaning which is that of a thing that is perceived or observed, however for simplicity of style, the researcher chooses to use the word 'object'). An object in this context can be defined as a thing which of which we have perception and understanding and which is allocated a name. The researcher contends that the objects identified and discussed later in the study exist independently of our observation of them, and he comes to this conclusion by two means. Firstly, as will be seen through extracts of the interview transcriptions, a significant number of the interviewees indicate that they have observed or experienced the same objects. This would lead the researcher to conclude that either there is a conspiracy, and that the interviewees have agreed to socially

construct the same story, or they have independently observed the same phenomena. Secondly, as Sayer (2000) suggests, our observation of things independently of ourselves are confirmed by the evident fallibility of our knowledge. That we get things wrong, have our expectations confounded and crash into things justifies a belief that the world exists regardless of what we happen to think about it. It was thus argued by the German philosopher Nicolai Hartmann that objects are indifferent to whether or not they are known, and so knowledge does not create or generate its objects. If knowledge does not generate its objects, then objects ontologically precede any attempt to grasp them. Whilst knowledge is relevant for the knower, it is of no importance to the object itself, instead knowledge uncovers aspects, brings to light dimensions and properties of objects. Knowledge also introduces a divide between that part of the object that has been uncovered, and that part which remains to be known, and the former is usually typified and then represented by concepts. This divide between the full ontological object, and the part of it that has been apprehended shifts as knowledge develops. Ontology then, is the theory of categories in the sense that all ontological distinctions have the form of categories. We come to state the ontological categories through the objects that we come to know, however our knowledge of ontological categories is more provisional still than our knowledge of objects. So, as our knowledge of objects changes, so does our understanding of ontological categories, and as this occurs over time, we gain a deeper and better grasp of their subtleties and articulation (Hartmann, 1949: cited in Poli, 2012).

In giving a thing a name we also apply a value to it. Again, we might call a thing 'chicken', but in doing so, two different observers may have different understandings of the object because of their background experience and understandings of the term chicken. Objects then, even at their most basic level, are value laden. In educational research, many of the objects that we perceive and understand are complex, and have names such as 'school' or 'leader' or 'accountability', and so the texture of the value attached to them becomes richer, and more prone to a range of interpretations How then do we know that two different people are talking about the same object? There must be a similarity in the values that different people give to the words that they use otherwise language would be nonsense. In order to fix the reference of a name, the namer must at least know what kind of object it is. To know what kind of object one is naming is to conceptualise that object, to think of it as a certain sort. It is thus to think of it as a 'qua such and such'. If this act of

reference thinking is to be successful, the namer must think of the object under a certain description, one that the object fits. This was coined by Devitt, (1981) as *The qua problem*, and enables people to apply agreed meanings to the objects they describe because there is an agreed consistency to the properties that the objects have. In applying names to things for them to become agreed objects, we also categorise them and so create concepts.

Concepts are the building blocks of any description, explanation or argument, and propositions and theories are constructed from them. It should be noted at this point that there is a fundamental disagreement about simplifying reality through scientific means because it is the fragmentation or compartmentalisation style of evaluation which it is argued leads to distortions of the reality being observed, thus a more holistic or contextual model of research is called for (Burns, 2000). If it is the researcher's contention that is his ontological position is positivist, and that objects exist independent of his observation of them, how is he to know that they are there? As will be shown, the interviewing of people who have experience and knowledge of the object that the researcher wishes to research, have a consistency in their answers. They use language to describe the objects that they perceive, and there is a commonality to their descriptions. In seeking the truth, the researcher accepts that the interpretation of the interviewees is plausibly governed by a *principle of charity* which prohibits the gratuitous ascription of false beliefs and descriptions to a population of speakers (Davidson, 1984). The account of reality which is being sought by this process is, however different from that which might be written in a chatty essay or a colour supplement magazine. What is wanted is not a social shopping list, recording what has been noticed, but an account of a series of interactions with the social world in a form that plausibly alerts the audience to the possibility of a new order, not hitherto seen – a theoretical account (Gherardi and Turner: cited in Huberman and Miles, 2002).

It can be argued that it is the role of science to observe and record and specify objects, whilst it is the role of philosophy to develop and articulate the theory of categories (Poli, 2012). This places the researcher's stance in between the binary poles of positivist and interpretivist, it bridges the 'what' description that is linked to positivism and the 'how' understanding that is linked with interpretivism, and so arguably places the researcher in the field of Critical Realism (Grix, 2010). Science and philosophy can be symbiotic in this arena because whilst science gathers the data, philosophy tends to concern itself with the process of formulating principles and establishing how they relate together into an overall

view. As such, they both seek to understand the nature of the world and its structures (Thompson, 1995). Thus, it is the researcher's contention that the objects at the core of his research exist independently of his looking for them, and he uses well established tools of the social scientist in an attempt to observe them. However, it is the role of philosophy to analyse, clarify and articulate the categories of objects into concepts that provide the ontological platform on which the study is subsequently constructed. These concepts are key components in the researcher's study.

3:5 Epistemology

Objectivity is akin to hygiene in that, whilst it is unattainable in its purest form, it is something that cooks, surgeons and researchers aspire to. If the researcher sets out to be objective through being detached and open minded, then he should be able to get a clearer view of the object that he is studying (Denscombe, 2010). If the object being observed is accurately described, then a representation of truth is being presented and this is a value that is undeniably worth striving for, because it can be approached only through rational means, and is regarded as the most important goal of science. However, the biggest challenge that faces the social scientist is that the researcher is themselves a part of a society and culture, and cannot distance themselves from that in order to become a neutral observer (MacLure, 2003; Walliman, 2011). As Silverman (2001) explains: 'Unfortunately, as most scientists and philosophers are agreed, the facts we 'find in the field' never speak for themselves, but are impregnated by our assumptions (p.1). Sayer (1992: cited in Denscombe, 2010) contends that whilst social phenomena cannot exist independently of actors or subjects, they do usually exist independently of the person who is studying them. Social scientists and historians produce interpretations of phenomena, but they do not produce the phenomena themselves. Reflexivity – my place in the process. I cannot be a fly on the wall, and so I am a participant in the research: 'The research instrument par excellence' (Hammersley and Atkins 1995: cited in Briggs and Coleman 2007, page 32). Reflexivity arises because researchers are a part of the social world that they are studying, and so cannot be completely independent of it. The observer's relationship with the object or is not simply a one-way street running between the researcher and the object of their study. Instead, the two affect each other mutually and continually through the course of the research (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000; Tripp, 1998).

A purely positivist conception of research in which the object is not influenced by the researcher, and the researcher is unaffected by the object is thus arguably untenable. As both the researcher and the object are involved in a common context, both are context dependent. This makes the prospect of a 'pure' description unlikely because any view that is held by the researcher is likely to be coloured by their background assumptions. The social science researcher is unable to see the situation 'first hand' through the eyes of those involved in the situation, the best the researcher can hope for is a 'second order' account of a 'first order' reality (Denscombe, 2010). Researchers who take a stance on research are cogniscent of the relationship between the object of research and the researcher. There is an acknowledgement of the belief systems that the researcher has, and the potential impact that that researcher can have on the object of the research (Grogan and Simmons: cited in Briggs and Coleman 2007).

To what extent can the researcher make a claim of objectivity to this study? He knows the school intimately having worked in the institution for many years, knowing both the people and the culture. Can he therefore say that he is 'outside and separate from'? Is the researcher likely to build up a similar picture to an outsider looking in? The answers to both these questions is no, and this is accepted by the researcher. Because the researcher is undertaking a case study and looking for 'thick description', he is in a position to get much further under the skin of the study. To compare an outsider with the researcher undertaking the same study is not comparing like with like, for what the outsider could bring to the study in objectivity, the researcher can make up for in the thickness of his description. However, whilst he may not be able to be fully detached, he can adopt the position of the detached observer by striving to adopt the stance of the stranger (Schutz, 1964: cited in Denscombe, 2010). In order to help the researcher to see a familiar object through fresh eyes, he can use counter factuality as a part of his interrogation of the phenomena being studied. The researcher is advised to ask questions such as: 'What if?' 'If only?' 'Even if' (Thomas, 2011). Thus, the researcher needs to give due consideration to alternative plausible hypothesis beforehand. Just because the evidence is consistent with the researcher's propositions, it does not necessarily follow that the propositions are true; indeed, it could be stated that many aspects of current scientific developments seem to contradict our common-sense notions and deeply held views (Thompson, 1995). The researcher should also look for evidence that might falsify any theory that he has. 'There

has to be openness to the possibility of being wrong' (Denscombe, 2010. p.83). A further fundamental objective of research design of explanatory research is to avoid invalid inferences. By this, it is meant that whilst the researcher can observe an effect, he cannot always observe the cause. He can often only infer the cause, and so it is important that the researcher takes care over this because inferences are fallible. Most causal thinking in social sciences is probabilistic rather than deterministic, by this we mean that there is never certainty about outcomes, for example smoking doesn't always cause cancer; the link in individual cases is probable, not determined (de Vaus, 2001).

Concepts are the expressions of a particular phenomenon, the words used to express meaning. Social scientists frequently recognise that the concepts within their model might be based on such factors as opinions, values, rules, traditions etc., and so cannot be readily pinned down (Walliman 2011). This implies that the language used by the researcher, both in his interviews and his written report must, as accurately as is reasonable, reflect the phenomenon he is attempting to describe in order that the interviewees and the reader understand the concepts being communicated. Researchers should have an awareness that they are ultimately caught up in an infinite web of language and meanings from which there is no escape, and which permits no bench mark from which can be plotted a measure of truth or reality (Denscombe, 2002). The researcher needs to be aware that because the objects in the social world are intrinsically meaningful, the meanings ascribed to them are not only externally descriptive, but a constitutive part of them. Meaning has to be understood, it cannot be measured or counted, and so there is always a hermeneutic element in social science. This means that whilst the social scientist can use the same methods as the natural scientist for causal explanation, they must also diverge from them for interpretive understanding. So, while natural scientists have to enter the hermeneutic circle of their scientific community, social scientists also have to enter that of whom they study. In operating in this double hermeneutic, the social scientist is involved in a two-way movement where the horizons of the researcher and the researched fuse together. In this context, the actions and texts of the researched never simply speak for themselves, but nor are they reducible to the researcher's interpretation of them either. Thus, the social scientist is in the position that they have internal access to the objects they wish to observe; however, it is a fallible access (Sayer, 2000). Thomas (2011) discusses ecological psychology which is the complex interaction of people within their environment. If one component is

altered, then another will be influenced, and this may change the original component. This makes the 'truth' that much more difficult to find, because the observer may not only be distorting the truth by their connection to the phenomena, but may also unwittingly distort associated components.

Ultimately, the guiding principle for research is not how it adheres to 'positivist' or 'interpretivist' epistemology, but how well it addresses the topic under investigation, and the research should be driven by the research question. It is generally accepted that social researchers can never be entirely objective; to achieve a completely impartial stance in the social world is not possible. Because the researcher sees things in a way that is inevitably shaped to some degree by his culture, his socialisation and the concepts by way of which he makes sense of the world, he can never stand independently of the world that he observes, and is himself a part of the world he seeks to study. That said, objectivity remains an ideal to which the researcher should aspire, aiming for a reasonable level of both detachment and open mindedness when it comes to the topic he is studying (Denscombe, 2002).

3:6 Critical Realism

Critical Realism has emerged as a popular alternative to the positivist and interpretivist schools of thought. Critical realists agree with the positivists that there is a world of events that is observable and independent of human consciousness. They also hold that knowledge about this world is socially constructed, and that society is made up of thinking, feeling human beings who have their own interpretations of the world. Critical realists believe that reality is arranged in levels and that scientific work must go beyond statements of regularity to analyse the mechanisms, processes and structures that account for the patterns that are observed (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). Because social systems are open, and people have the capacity to learn and thus change their behaviour, they evolve rather than equilibrate. Critical Realism acknowledges that social phenomena are intrinsically meaningful and so the meaning is not only externally descriptive, but a constitute part of the phenomena. Meaning has to be understood rather than measured or counted, and so critical realists focus on necessity and contingency rather than regularity, accepting that causal processes can cause quite different results in different processes. It tends to lean towards positivism, although it is only partly naturalistic, for although social science can use the same methods as natural science regarding causal explanation, it must also diverge

from them using interpretive understanding (Sayer, 2000). Thus, it has taken the certainty out of the approach. It calls for the researcher to be more guarded about any claims, looking for tentative propositions rather than grand theories. There are four main ontological assumptions about critical realism:

- Reality exists independent of an individual's experience or interpretation of it. Both the physical and the social worlds have real existence.

- Reality is not always observable. Social class, mental health and personal motivation are all very real, but cannot be directly observed, nor directly measured. They exist independently of whether a researcher chooses to believe in them.

- The impact of reality is not always predictable. For example, social class has a probable effect on educational achievement, but social class will not predict educational achievements. Effects exist in terms of probability, not certainty.

- Social reality is complex and so not necessarily revealed by things that can be observed. A reality can exist, but is not always observable. In the social world, there may be multiple causes that intertwine, and it may not be possible to identify all the causes, let alone separate them out.

Critical Reality is also characterised by two main epistemological assumptions:

- We can only 'know' the world through theories. There is no way of directly representing social reality, this is done through theories, and there is always the chance that the theory is wrong. Researchers therefore are always motivated to strive for better theories.

- Research methods are themselves theory laden. Theory is deeply embedded in our understanding of social reality. It permeates the research activity, and so our methods of observation cannot be seen as neutral tools, they are infused with assumptions.

Critical realists do not collect facts, nor do they discover theories in the same way in which positivist researchers may see their role. Rather, they interpret facts and produce theories in a way that recognises the Interpretivists' tenant that it is not possible for researchers to understand the world in a way that is entirely neutral and objective (Denscombe, 2010).

3:7 Validity and reliability

All research must be rigorous, and educational research is no exception. It is arguably more difficult to work with subjective data than it is to work with objective data, and as such, research into educational leadership, with its emphasis on values is demanding of high level research skills (Lomax, 2003). Validity and reliability are then, central to the integrity of the researcher's work, for if a qualitative study cannot produce a reliable and valid result, then policies, programmes or predictions based on the study cannot be depended upon (Maxwell: cited in Huberman and Miles, 2002). The researcher asks the question 'Why should anyone believe the findings of this research?' The research needs to convince the reader that the research strategy, the methods of data collection and the mode of analysis are reasonable, and that the findings produced are better than anything that could be based on common sense (Denscombe, 2002). When data are gathered from an investigation, the audience needs to know what faith can be put in the data as truly indicating the participant's performance or behaviour, and with all data the audience must ask whether the assessment instrument or technique was stable, dependable, consistent, predictable, accurate? They also need an understanding of the conditions under which the data were obtained such that, as far as possible, only the subject's ability is reflected in the data, and all other extraneous factors have been minimised as far as possible (Burns, 2000).

The researcher is advised to make as many of the research steps as operational as possible, and to conduct the research as though someone were always looking over one's shoulder. Accountants and bookkeepers are always aware that their calculations must be capable of auditing. In this sense, the auditor is providing a reliability check, and must be able to produce the same results if following the same procedures. A sound guideline for case studies then, is to conduct the research in such a way that an auditor could replicate the procedures, and arrive at the same result for ultimately, a question that needs to be at the back of the researcher's mind throughout the study is, will other people come to the same conclusion if they were to independently follow the procedures specified in order to observe and measure the same objects or phenomena (Walliman, 2011; Yin, 2009).

The researcher's study is involved in things that do not lend themselves to direct measurement: ideas, attitudes, perceptions, experiences, and feelings; and as such, much of the research is infused with the interpretations of both the researcher and the interviewees. It is right and proper therefore that the researcher consciously goes to

reasonable lengths to establish criteria for sound validity, and as such it is necessary therefore for him to use indirect indicators of the thing being investigated. One way in which the researcher and his audience can have confidence in the data is that the chosen indicators are closely linked to the research question. This can be achieved by the researcher's construction of an interview schedule that asks questions that link directly to the research question. This supports content validity in that it ensures that the right indicators and questions are being asked. If an interview question being asked is appropriate within its own terms of reference, then it will have construct validity, and this relies on comparing the results from two or more indicators of the concept. If the pattern revealed is in line with the theory, then there will be support for the view that the indicator is valid (Denscombe, 2010).

Case study designs should be devised in such a way that they give a sensible and plausible account of events. The acknowledgement and inclusion of context is important because behaviour takes place within a context, and its meaning stems largely from that context. To isolate the behaviour from the context and strip it from the meaning that is given to it by the actors is to invite misunderstanding, and so threaten the internal validity of the research. By developing a full, well rounded casual account, case studies can achieve a high internal validity (de Vaus, 2001). Silverman (2001) commends taking the findings of a study back to the participants. Where the findings are verified by those subjects, he argues that more confidence can be placed in the validity of those findings, and this he describes as respondent validity. An interesting line of argument is put forward by Thomas (2011) who makes the case that neither reliability nor validity are relevant to the case study because the sample is unique and so not generalizable. He contends that, because the case study is the study of one thing in a particular context, it is not the kind of inquiry in which considerations about validity and reliability should be at the fore, since it is the singleness of the subject, and the singleness or peculiarity even, of the analysis and interpretation of the evidence that is of significance. However, as the researcher contends in the next section on generalizability, there may well be ways in which the study of a single case can have relevance to other situations.

3:8 Research tools

The researcher set out to explore the area bounded by his research question, and in doing so, he needed to find the best methods to elicit the answers he was searching for. The

research question had set the direction of the literature review, the result of which was a set of initial theories or propositions. These propositions gave clarity to the next stage of the research, for without some idea of what it is he is looking for, the researcher will not know what he has found (de Vaus, 2001). Such propositions do not lay out precise findings that are to be found, however they do specify certain basic conditions that underlie the approach of the research, and they also point towards general areas of the findings that might be expected (Denscombe, 2010). The interview stage is designed around these propositions, in the anticipation that the data gathered will support the propositions: *'If you go into your case study with a tightly constructed theory or set of propositions to guide your research, you will be looking for data that will gather around ideas as the study progresses.'* (Thomas 2011, p.162).

The researcher considered a number of research methods. To begin, he looked at undertaking an Action Research approach. This was rejected on the grounds that a programme would ideally need to be run twice, with the perceived benefits of the first programme incorporated into the second, and the progress recorded. The researcher felt that, whilst such an approach would fit within the time span of a part-time PhD, the overall length of a twice run programme would be more unwieldy than he would like. The researcher considered a Grounded Theory approach. On balance he felt that, in its pure form, this had the potential to be too ambiguous, particularly with such a tightly defined research question, however there are aspects of Grounded Theory, particularly the coding of data, that were ultimately incorporated into his research design. The researcher also looked into a Systems Analysis approach to the research. Whilst there are aspects of this theory that appealed, in the final analysis he rejected the idea because he felt that the subject of leadership was not suitable for breaking down into constituent parts. After considerable deliberation, he elected to use a Case Study method of investigating the research question.

3:9 A Case Study

The case is a bounded entity, and its study starts from a desire to understand through closeness, an insightful appreciation of phenomena that will hopefully result in new learning about real-world behaviour and its meaning (Yin, 2012). The very title 'case study' draws attention to the epistemological question: What can be learned about the single case? To this end the researcher has looked to design his study to optimise the

understanding of the case rather than to generalise about it (Stake: cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). An essential feature of a case study is that sufficient data is collected to enable the researcher to explore significant components of the case and put forward explanations for what he observes. A further feature key to the case study is that it is conducted primarily in its natural context (Bassey, 1999). So, a case is an account of social life that covers many facets, various angles and multiple levels that make up its complexity. It has a quality that conveys enough detail that the reader can imagine 'being there' to the point that they themselves can unravel the layers of meaning. The researcher plays an important part in providing the information, but the reader also plays a crucial role in the transferability of the findings. The reader is not a 'passive recipient' who soaks up the researcher's findings, but it is the reader who is in a position to engage with, interpret and evaluate the findings, and subsequently transfers the findings to other situations, using their own knowledge, experience and values to do so (Denscombe, 2010).

Denscombe (2002) contends that, broadly speaking, there are four grounds on which cases might be chosen in order to reflect their particular qualities. First, the case is considered typical of other instances (and there is nothing special or unusual about the case chosen by the researcher); second, the case is an extreme instance; third, it is the least likely scenario, and so chosen to destruction in order to falsify a claim; fourth, it is a special case – a one off or extremely rare. The researcher finds these categories of particular interest because on the one hand, it could be argued that his case is typical of other instances, and that there is nothing unusual or special about the case he is investigating. However, on the other hand it could be argued that, because of the context of the school he is conducting his study within, and there being no record of previous research in the area (Harvey, 2007 & 2015), the case could be seen as being very rare. Stake (cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2008) describes the *intrinsic* case study as being one where the researcher wants a better understanding of a particular case. It is not undertaken primarily because the case is representative of other cases or because it illustrates a particular situation, but instead because in all its particularity and ordinariness, the case itself is interesting. The researcher would suggest that the study he is proposing falls neatly into Stake's category because it is not his intention to find a representative case; the case that he has chosen, whilst ordinary, will also be unique to both its location and its actors. It can be described as being atypical because it is located within a single sex independent secondary school. However, it is

suggested that there are many case study proponents who argue that the understanding of the general is enhanced by the study of the atypical (Burns, 2000). In the first instance, qualitative researchers set out to describe before they analyse, and these descriptions need to be sufficiently detailed to provide an accurate portrayal of the many facets of the phenomenon that is being studied. Such descriptions need to be 'thick descriptions' in that they deal with the multifaceted and complex nature of the phenomenon, what Foucault (1981) referred to as a 'polyhedron of intelligibility'; that is a multifaceted view of a situation – a three-dimensional view of a case in such a way that the reader is able to gain a revealing insight into the particular situation (Denscombe, 2010). A well-designed case study will not simply examine some of the constituent elements, it will build a picture of the case by considering information gained at many levels (de Vaus, 2001). Thus, the researcher is advised to use a limited number of cases, and that these should be selected from examples of behaviour, type or situation that suit the researcher's focus. The researcher should scrutinise the data, looking to perceive trends or patterns, and selecting a case as the patterns emerge.

The case study should then be fleshed out with details, the researcher making the narrative come to life as they involve the reader within it (Wisker, 2008). Yin (2012) warns that the analysing of the data produced within a case study has the potential to be troublesome because the data may be expected to speak for itself. He suggests that, if at least some key assumptions are made, then it is possible to anticipate and plan the analytical strategies in the early stages. For example, pattern matching logic would allow the researcher to compare empirically based patterns in the data with predictive models. Likewise, an explanation building technique may start with an open-ended question which leads in due course to the explanation of a phenomenon. It is a distinguishing characteristic of case studies that contextual information is also collected about a case in order that we have a context within which to understand causal processes (de Vaus, 2001). The narrative is a further essential part of the case study. As opposed to the reductionist approach of the natural scientist, it is the fibres that concern time, place, meaning, intention and their interrelation that binds the whole story together. An analogy would be the reading of a novel; the reader could not take one chapter and make very much sense of the whole story, each character can be understood only in the context of the whole and, just as the story has coherence, integrity and progression, so must the case study. The narrative however,

should also have diachronicity, it should change over time. In this regard, the narrative is essential to the case study because it enables the reader to see 'wholes' rather than fractured parts. Thus, the reader should be able to smell human breath and hear the sound of voices, and ideally, nothing is to be lost in the refraction that occurs through the researcher's own understanding as an interpreting inquirer (Thomas, 2011). Case studies then, are particularly suited to research where the phenomenon cannot be distinguished from its context or where it must be seen within its context. The *meaning* of behaviour helps us make sense of why an event produces a particular outcome. It is argued that, when conducting case studies, it is important to collect subjective information and build it into the analysis of the case (de Vaus, 2001).

Yin (2009) recommends that the research design of a case study is very important, and that there are five components that need to be considered:

- The question or questions posed by the study.
- The propositions that are forwarded, and the manner by which they direct attention to something that should be examined within the scope of the study. (The researcher's propositions, based on review of pertinent literature, contend that middle leadership within a school is important to a child's learning, and that leadership development is something that neither attention nor resources are given to in the school within which the study is based. The researcher wants to find out what is needed, and how it can be delivered, each of which are considered to be ideally suited questions to case study theory according to Yin.)
- The unit of analysis. (This, for the researcher is the specific school within which the case is bounded, and consists of two main groups: the senior leaders in the organisation, and the newly appointed middle leaders.)
- Linking the data to the propositions. (The researcher has laid the propositions out clearly, based on the literature, and with the interview schedule clearly tied into them. It is anticipated therefore, that data provided through the interviewing will link directly to the propositions.)
- Criteria for interpreting the findings. This is in part to ensure that the researcher can, if need be, identify and address alternative explanations for his findings.

(Yin, 2009)

3:10 The sample

It is contended by Denscombe (2002) that qualitative researchers and interpretivists look for samples that are chosen for their specific traits because, as researchers, they are unable to choose large, random samples. Sampling needs to be purposeful in that the researcher should think carefully about the parameters of the population they wish to observe, and they choose the sample on that basis. Sampling in qualitative research is neither objectively statistical nor subjectively personal, but must be theoretically grounded, thus qualitative researchers select participants purposefully, integrating small numbers of cases according to their relevance Silverman (2001). The researcher gave due consideration to the sample that he was able to use, and looked into a number of alternatives.

First, he considered the option of selecting a wide sample through a random mailshot of questionnaires to a number of schools. This was discounted because the researcher surmised that a questionnaire, whilst giving the opportunity to gain breadth across many schools, would be strictly limited in the depth that it could offer, and the study would become wide and shallow. A second reservation was that the questions, once sent out, are fixed and the replies have the potential to open up more question, and because the researcher didn't quite know what he was looking for at the beginning of the study, felt that this method lacked the flexibility he wanted. Next, the idea of conducting interviews with participants across a range of different schools was considered, enabling a comparison between the context of the independent sector with the wider educational field. The researcher felt that he had enough contacts within the secondary sector to be able to interview middle leaders from boys' schools, girls' schools, mixed schools, boarding and day. However, as time went on and he looked more deeply into this option, the less appropriate it appeared for the scale of the study. Problems of logistics, re-interviewing, ensuring there was a balance across the schools, the potential for widely differing or perhaps conflicting views from different institutions, along with the range of structures within which differing middle managers work, persuaded the researcher that this route was probably beyond the resources, most particularly of time, available for a single researcher at PhD level. The researcher also felt that the final study would be wide and shallow rather than narrow and deep, and less satisfying.

The researcher also considered interviewing a number of people on the fringes of the study, such as leaders experienced in fields outside education and in the voluntary youth sector.

This, he felt, would help 'situate' his study within the wider leadership arena, however it was rejected on the same grounds as the model of using a range of different schools. A fourth option that was considered was to base the study within the school within which the researcher works. Because of the demographics of the staff, there have been a significant number of teachers appointed to middle leadership roles within the 24 months prior to the commencement of the study. This gives the researcher a rich seam of inquiry in a convenient location. Whilst generalizability may be a desirable aspiration of the study, the researcher felt that it was better for him to concentrate on richness or depth of the data, if at the cost of applying the findings to a wider arena. Thus, the researcher settled on a small, clearly bounded case, recognising the advice that the case inquirer should think small, but drill deep (Thomas, 2011).

The researcher chose to interview the senior leaders of the school early in the schedule, his reason being that he felt that they could give background information to the study, and inform the researcher on the organisation's perspective on its middle leaders. In retrospect, and if starting again, the researcher would repeat this decision because, although very little of the data produced by those interviews has been included in this thesis, the views of the senior leadership proved to be influential in defining the context. A good example of this is in the bounding of the sample itself – who exactly are the middle leaders in the school? When asked, the Headmaster gave clear guidance:

> *… head of Geography, head of department, head of year and or an activity. So I would say my head of rowing is a middle leader actually, because he takes responsibility for other adults and not just for kids.* (Headmaster)

This proved to be particularly helpful, not so much because the Headmaster included his head of rowing, although that was useful, but in that he defined middle leaders as those who take responsibility for other adults. This clear and unequivocal statement was crucial in selecting the sample, but it also gave guidance to the coding that took place during the interview schedule because it became apparent as the process unfurled that it is in the taking of responsibility for other adults that many of the middle leaders found their greatest challenge.

The main body of the sample, and those interviewed in the earlier stage of the study, were those middle leaders who had been in their leadership post for up to 18 months. During the first six months of the interview schedule, the researcher was able to interview eight

such participants. As these interviews were transcribed, the researcher became aware that, whilst recently appointed middle leaders were able to articulate the issues they had, they often lacked the experience needed to deal with them. It struck the researcher that, if he were to open the interviews up to more experienced middle leaders, then he should be able to collect data, pertinent to the research question, which would inform potential support mechanisms. To this end, the researcher interviewed nine participants with more than 19 months in post, the most experienced being 26 years. The interview schedule is listed in Appendix 1, and shows that the first interviewees were the Senior Leaders followed by those who had been in post for 18 months or less. There then follows a tranche of more experienced middle leaders. The last five interviewees appear anomalous in that they consist of two further senior leaders and three relatively new middle leaders. The reason these were interviewed at this point is that each of these five had been appointed to their post relatively recently; because of the churn in appointments over the 22-month interview schedule none had been in post at the beginning of the interview schedule.

3:11 Interviews

Peter Ribbins makes clear that the purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in a person's mind, not for the interviewer to put things there. He also advises that, through the experience of his own research, if it is only possible to undertake a series of one-off interviews, then he considers the semi-structured format to be the best approach to adopt (cited in Briggs and Coleman, 2007). Arguably semi-structured interviews provide the structure of a list of issues to be covered along with the freedom to follow up points as required – they give the best of both worlds (Thomas, 2009). There are two suggested metaphors to the interviewing process. Firstly, the interviewer as a miner, looking for nuggets of information that exist either on the surface, or deeper down, and then digging to extract them. Secondly, the interviewer is a traveller on a journey, discovering things as they go along, possibly changing both themselves and the interviewee in the process; in this metaphor, the process of interviewing and analysis can be seen as intertwined phases of knowledge construction. Either way, interviewing is an active process during which the interviewer and the interviewee produce knowledge through their relationship; however, it is important to note the power asymmetry in that the interviewer has the control of the dialogue (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009). The researcher needs to be confident that his interviews are insofar as is practical, neutral in that the interview itself does not bias the

findings, and consistent in that the interview will produce the same results each time (or different people would produce the same results). However, the researcher has to accept that, because he is the instrument of data collection, his position is at best one of relative neutrality rather than absolute neutrality. He needs to have a self-awareness of retaining objectivity in relation to the interviews, looking for low inference indicators which will explain the situation with the minimum of interpretation from himself (Denscombe, 2010). A major feature of the understanding of the qualitative interview technique appear, from a methodologically positivist perspective, to be a source of error. The epistemological standpoint that takes its starting point as the elimination of human subjectivity in research, will judge the qualitative interview to be unscientific, and so from a positivist standpoint, interviewing cannot be a scientific method. However, quantified knowledge is not the goal of the interview (Kvale and Brinkman 2009).

As the researcher went into the initial interview, based on the methodological issues considered through the literature review, he made the following notes in his journal to keep at the back of his mind:

- During the interview, look for evidence that will lend a perspective to the propositions. Listen carefully to the answers given by the participant, and consider whether evidence supports the proposition, whether it contradicts the proposition (having an awareness of counter factuality), or whether it has strength of argument to change or adapt the proposition.

- Take the philosophical stance that reality exists, independent of my observing it. However, the reality I seek may not be directly observable, and the impact of the reality may not be predictable because reality frequently exists in terms of probability not certainty. Therefore, the nature of reality in the world I am looking into is intertwined; there will be a wide range of factors that are inseparable.

- I will be interpreting the reality through the lens of my own history and values. My observation will be infused with assumptions. Nonetheless, I should strive for the truth, trying to avoid being blinded by the obvious, and seeing things through fresh eyes.

- I must understand and articulate the research tools that I am using and imagine that someone is looking over his shoulder in order to audit my work.

- I am striving to describe a 'polyhedron of intelligibility', bringing sense to a multifaceted phenomenon.

At the beginning of the process the researcher predicted that the interview schedule could go from being monologic, whereby the interviewee would unfold their ideas whilst the researcher listened, to dialogic where the interviewee unfolds their ideas, the researcher listens, and then suggests ways in which the situation can be changed. The process thus moves from one which is a knowledge process for the learner to one that is a process of knowledge, learning and change on both sides (Flick, 2011). This proved not to be the case however, and as the interview schedule unfurled, the researcher found himself largely adhering to the monologic approach in order to build a picture of how things are rather than how they might be.

3:12 Coding the data

Whilst the researcher's primary vehicle for undertaking the research was a case study, during the collection and coding of the data, he drew on aspects of grounded theory whereby the data collection and the analysis go hand in hand as the process evolves. He found that this offered systematic but flexible guidelines for the collecting and analysing data enabling the researcher to construct theories which consist of 'abstract conceptualizations' of the problems that are experienced by people (Thornbeg and Charmaz, 2011). It is of note that, because he had formulated the propositions and so had a clear idea of what he was looking for, he was unable to use a grounded theory model exclusively. Theoretical sampling is the process of collecting data for the purpose of generating theory. As the researcher jointly collects, codes and analyses data from their sample, he decides what data to collect next and where to find it. Through this process, a theory is developed as it emerges, and the process of data collection is influenced by the emerging theory. The criteria of theoretical sampling may then be continually tailored to fit the incoming data, and be applied judiciously at the right moment in the analysis. This way, the researcher can continually adjust the control of the data to ensure relevance to the criteria of the emerging theory. The researcher needs to have a degree of theoretical sensitivity in order to conceptualise and formulate a theory as it emerges from the data. A fundamental question in theoretical sampling then is, to what group or sub group should the researcher turn next in data collection, and for what theoretical purpose? The possibilities may be endless, and so the researcher needs to choose their group or groups

according to theoretical criteria (Glaser and Straus, 1967). The number of interviewees depends not only on the availability and willingness of potential respondents, but also on whether the researcher looking for broad trends or deep insights, because this can guide the number of interviewees he wishes to interview and help enable the interviews to be information rich. From this it follows that the participants need to be selected with care, they should not be picked randomly, but with intention in their selection, and with enough participants to saturate the data (Mears: cited in Arthur et al 2012).

Coding begins as soon as the first data is gathered in theoretical sampling, the researcher creating their codes by defining what they see in the data. It is a matter of continually comparing newly coded data in a category that is populated with data that has previously been coded, thus constantly striving to develop the category's properties (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000). Coding then is not a linear process, but one which moves back and forth. Saldaña (2013) describes a system of coding suitable for the first cycle of coding when transcribing interviews. In structural coding, the researcher tags a content based or conceptual phrase that represents a topic of inquiry to a segment of data relating to a specific interview question. Similarly, coded segments are then collected for further, more detailed analysis and coding. Initial coding gives the researcher the opportunity to reflect deeply on the contexts and nuances of the data, taking ownership of them. It has no specific formula, but is open ended, providing a starting point for further exploration, with all proposed codes at this stage being tentative and provisional. Initial coding can range from the descriptive to the conceptual to the theoretical, depending on the personal experience and knowledge of the researcher. During second cycle coding, the analysis leads to reduction whereby the researcher may identify underlying consistencies in the original set of categories, enabling them to formulate theory with a smaller set of higher level categories (Glaser and Straus, 1967). In essence, the first cycle of coding is reorganised to develop steadily smaller and more select groups of broader categories. If, for example, during the first coding, 50 codes were generated from the data corpus, then during the second coding, there may be 25 of these codes placed in one category, 15 codes in a second category, and the remaining 10 codes in a third. Thus, despite its intentions, the coding process does not represent reality in an unambiguous way through an objective and secure procedure. On the contrary, it is a question of the researcher interpreting what it is that

they think they are seeing in the light of their own frames of reference (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000).

One hallmark of such a coding process is the drawing of repeated samples until no new concepts emerge. According to the research approach, the number of participants should remain flexible. Theoretical saturation methods say that one should continue gathering data until the theory being developed the theory being developed becomes saturated, and no more information comes in that either dispels or contradicts the theory (Lichtman, 2013). Informed guessing is also at the foundation of good analysis, and the attempt to understand. So long as it involves intelligent assembling of evidence, it provides the basis for finding solutions and solving problems (Thomas, 2011). This method of constant comparative investigation is designed to assist the researcher in generating a theory that is integrated, consistent, plausible and close to the data whilst at the same time being clear enough to be readily, if only partially, operationalised for testing in qualitative research. Whilst the method is dependent on the sensitivity and skill of the researcher, it is not designed to guarantee that two researchers working independently with the same data will arrive at the same results, rather it is designed to allow for a degree of vagueness and flexibility that will aid the creative generation of theory (Saldaña, 2013). The researcher's mind-set needs to anticipate alternative ways of interpreting the findings, particularly looking for double loop fundamental causation. The researcher then needs to regard any interpretation as provisional (de Vaus, 2001).

3:13 Generalisability

Generalizability needs to be included within the rationale for the research and explicitly addressed as a ground rule for the research, it cannot be ignored (Denscombe, 2002). It is a feature of qualitative studies that they are not usually designed in such a way that systematic generalisations can be transferred to a wider population. Internal generalisation, that is generalisation within the organisation to other people or groups, is more important for the researcher than external generalisability, that is generalising to other communities, because the researcher should not be making explicit claims about the external generalisation of his accounts (Maxwell: cited in Huberman and Miles, 2002). de Vaus (2001) states that *'A profound understanding of a case, it is argued, provides no basis for generalising to a wider population beyond that case… A case is just that - a case - and cannot be representative of a large universe of cases'* (p.237). Statistical generality (or

generalisation) is based on the statistical probability that the researcher can generalise his findings to a wider population than his sample is meant to represent. It is correct to say that the case study cannot provide any basis for making statistically valid generalisations beyond the particular case. However, theoretical generalisation considers what a study can tell about a particular theory – and case studies are fundamentally theoretical (de Vaus, 2001). Case studies then, concern themselves with generalising to other situations on the basis of analytical claims rather than statistical claims (Yin, 2012). Denscombe (2002) differentiates between generalisability, which he defines as a quality of findings that is measurable, testable and associated with quantitative and positivistic research, and transferability, which is more intuitive, inferring how the findings might transfer to other situations. If research is to be transferable, he argues, then the information used needs to be sufficient to justify it, and so the term 'thick description' is often used in this context. Thick description captures the many facets, angles and multiple layers that comprise the complex reality that is social life, and are gathered and described in such a way that the reader can imagine being there. This transferability is called 'Theory relevance' by Denscombe who argues that statistical generalisation is not possible in a small, site specific case study. Transferability then is the imaginative application of findings to other settings. It is a process undertaken in an informal, personal and creative fashion, carried out by the readers of research as they infer what they have read and 'transfer' it to other situations. The more information the reader has about the original research, the better informed their inferences should be, and the more helpful it should be to their own context (Brookes and Normore, 2015).

Bassey (1999) coins the term 'fuzzy generalization' as being a prediction made subsequent to an empirical enquiry that says something *may* happen, but without any measure of its probability there is an inherent element of uncertainty. Denscombe (2002) cites the example of a case study into officials working in a social security office. This, he contends, may be justified as transferable, not in terms of how well it fits into patterns of social security offices, but how it relates to the theory of bureaucracy which is relevant to the subject. This is of importance to the researcher in that consideration should be given in due course as to, not only the extent to which the findings of his study have the potential to be transferred, but also to the contexts to which they may be transferable, because it could apply to wider areas of leadership rather than the confines of education or independent

schools, being that this is where the larger conceptual framework lies. A fuzzy generalization reports on something that happened in one place and suggests that it might happen elsewhere. The researcher would contend that a study that is built up from data that is infused with variables and subjectivity has inherent flexibility, because it cannot be a precise record of the phenomena. If it is incapable of being a true record of the phenomena being observed, it has a 'fuzziness' of its own, and so it is more likely to have a 'fuzzy' fit to other applications.

3:14 Summary

In this chapter, the researcher has set out both his methodology and his methods, explaining his strategy of what he hopes to find out through the study, and how he plans on finding it. He has articulated why he wants to undertake this piece of research and what tools he is using to both investigate and interpret the phenomena he is looking at. The researcher began by explaining how the research question has underpinned the methods used in the study, and shown how the question has proved to be a constant throughout this part of the study. He then argued that the study is original, filling a blank spot in the research into middle leadership development. The researcher has laid out his ontological standpoint, explaining that he takes the view that objects exist independent of the observer and thus, philosophically, a positivist stance can be taken concerning their existence. However, epistemologically, he has also shown that, because he is a part of the study and unable to separate himself from it, his observations are infused with his interpretation, and so the recording and analysis of his observations are undertaken from an interpretivist standpoint, thus he adopts the position of the Critical Realist.

As the subsequent interview schedule took place over time, the researcher became steadily more aware of the many different layers of interpretation involved. Firstly, there is the researcher's subjective view of the situation in the workplace that influences his framing of the research question. Then there is the selectivity and relevance of the reading (not to mention a degree of luck in the selection), the construction of the propositions and the wording of the interview questions. There is then the interviewee's interpretation of the question, and objectivity in giving their answer. Whilst the researcher transcribes the interviews word perfectly throughout, body language and inflection of voice are not present, thus much of the 'richness' of the data is inevitably missed out. As the coding of the data developed, the researcher became more aware that coding is in itself an

interpretive process. Finally, there is the researcher's own experience in leadership, through which lens he cannot but help look; 'The inevitable selectivity and ordering will mean that all descriptions are our descriptions, rather than the descriptions of the case' (de Vaus, 2001, p. 251).

The researcher then turned his attention to the research methods he intended using, explaining how, after considering a range of alternatives, a case study research tool was chosen. The researcher is fortunate in working in an environment which has a significant number of recently appointed middle leaders, and which provides a sample that is large enough for such a study to be undertaken. Thought was given to pushing the bounds of the case beyond the boundaries of the school within which he works, however for reasons of expediency, it was decided to confine the case to the single school. The study is to be local because the participants all work within the same organisation. It is to be exploratory in that, through the interview schedule, the study will look to find out what the participants consider to be their needs for their leadership development; however, the study will also be explanatory in that it will benchmark these findings against the propositions formulated through research review, refining them and explaining them to the reader. The case study is to be instrumental because it is the researcher's aim that the ultimate purpose of the study will be to provide knowledge that is of use in the workplace. The researcher will interpret his findings in order to modify his propositions, and build a theory on which he can he can design a leadership development programme that is appropriate to the needs of the middle leaders in the specific context within which the researcher works. The researcher found that a case study, combined with a constant comparative processing of the data was a most appropriate method of working, interviewing respondents using a schedule based on the literature review and then coding and recoding the data to build a theory. From this, the researcher looks to provide an outcome. Outcomes are not the same as results or findings; these are based on the analysis of the data collected. Outcomes refer to the things produced by the research that were part of the overall purpose of the research. They can take the form of: A new body of information; a contribution to theory and knowledge; answers to practical problems; recommendations for good practice, and publication (Denscombe, 2010).

The researcher has approached both the validity and reliability of his work with thought and care from the outset. At each stage of the study, the researcher has referred back to

the original research question to ensure that there is an internal validity to his work. The original research question led to the literature review, this led to the first set of propositions which enabled the researcher to frame the interview schedule. Throughout the study, he has been aware of Yin's metaphor of an accountant or bookkeeper watching over his shoulder, and he has kept careful records of each stage that has been undertaken. This gives a clear audit trail for any independent observer wishing to follow the study. Whilst such an observer may not reach the same conclusions, it has been the researcher's aim that they could understand how he reached his (Yin, 2009). Whilst the researcher set out to undertake a process that is auditable throughout, he suggests that there are so many variables, it is unlikely that another researcher would begin at the same start point and finish with the same conclusions. However, because the researcher has presented an auditable investigation that has validity and reliability at its core, it will present the reader with conclusions that can be understood even if not agreed upon. The researcher interprets the data as he codes it into categories that provide the ontological concepts that he requires, and as such he is a significant part of the process. It is the researcher's view that his study has parallels with an impressionist painting. The researcher has the dual role of striving to get the individual daubs of colour as true to reality as he can, and then organise them in such a way that they present a credible and recognisable picture to the viewer. If the picture has an inevitable fuzziness to it, then the researcher contends that it will have a greater capacity for flexibility to be applied to inform leaders and coaches in other spheres if they understand the interpretive nature of the work.

The researcher has given thought to the generalisability of the study, and concluded that to extrapolate the findings and transpose them directly into other schools or leadership scenarios is not appropriate; his findings do not constitute any grand theory. However, there are two points that he wishes to make: First, a combination of the literature review and his own experience would suggest that there are commonalities to all leadership, and so any reader with an interest in or background of leadership may be able to pick out themes with which they can empathise. Much leadership is based on tacit knowledge, most leaders learn 'on the job', and even leadership trainers teach based on first-hand knowledge rather than empirical research. Thus, it is anticipated that there will be a degree of transferability in the findings. Second, because the study is atypical in that it is based in an independent, single sex secondary school, it will in its own way add to the polyhedral

vision of leadership development, adding a small piece of jigsaw to a larger picture in line with the view of Burns (2000).

Chapter 4: Research Design

4:1 Introduction

The methodology section has laid out the reasoning behind the study, and the justification for using the methods employed. In this Research Design chapter, the researcher describes the main parts of the process, describing how the study was conducted, the processes by which data was gained, categorised, stored and used, and how the audit trail remained secure throughout. He also records some of the choices that needed to be made and the reasoning behind the final decisions. This research programme explores two areas that are blind spots in the research: the independent sector, and middle leadership, and the study explores the first through a case study and the second through the researcher's interpretation of the data produced in the case study through a process of constant comparative coding. In this chapter, the researcher makes clear both the methods used and the justification for using them.

4:2 Ethics

Ethical approval was sought from the university through their ethics procedure in April 2013, and was granted shortly after. The researcher approached the Headteacher as gatekeeper and explained the proposed research programme to him. The researcher confirmed this request in writing and received both verbal and written permission to undertake the study within the school according to Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) protocols. A consent form was produced for each candidate (Appendix II) which was read and signed before the interview. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher immediately after, and a copy of the transcript given to the participant along with a permission form (Appendix V), allowing the researcher to use the data from the interview in an anonymised manner. All the interviewees complied with this process, and two made minor alterations to the transcripts. All recordings were deleted as soon as the participant had signed the permission form, only two hard copies of each transcript were made (one for the researcher, one for the participant), and all electronic copies of the transcripts were kept securely on university hard drives. Signed hard copies of the consent form and permission form were kept in a locked cabinet, throughout the process, accessible only by the researcher. At all times and at each stage, the researcher adhered rigorously to the LJMU Ethics Policy.

4.3 The researcher's Journals

Rather than recording everything electronically, or trying to keep track of a very large volume of paper records, the researcher made the decision to maintain records in A5 journals as an 'academic diary'. All relevant texts, ideas, sketches were recorded methodically and in chronological order. This did give the disadvantage that it could take a little time to locate a passage or idea, but the advantage that everything was recorded in a manageable document which ultimately led to five volumes and 1004 pages. Because the researcher is an insider researcher, and a pragmatist who is searching for useful knowledge, these journals have proved invaluable in producing the study as they not only record all the literature that has been used in this thesis, but also many of the experiences he has encountered, records of informal discussions, emails with his Director of Studies etc. A key reason for maintaining these journals was the advice of Yin (2009) who encouraged researchers to imagine that they have an auditor looking over their shoulder asking for accountability and traceability of all material. Whilst the researcher's method of recording and retrieval may not be the most efficient it is, he would suggest, very secure in that, given a little time, he can trace any quotation used or decision made. The researcher refers to these journals during the findings and analysis section of the thesis for, whilst they are not quite the same as field notes, their contents do help to bring an immediacy to the thesis which is written by a practitioner researcher, showing the reader just why particular decisions were taken at the time that they were.

4:4 Interviews

The interviews commenced in May 2013, as soon as ethical approval had been granted. The researcher used semi-structured interviews because the research questions bounded the case, and the propositions gave him the framework within which to work, thus giving both structure to the schedule, and freedom to follow up points as required (Thomas 2011). The researcher used two Interview Schedules, one for the senior leaders and one for the middle leaders (Appendices III and IV), each of the questions asked at this stage linking into one or more of the propositions. The researcher included the Headteacher and Deputy Heads in the first tranche of interviews because he felt that this would help provide a backdrop or context to the study. Whilst the data provided by them proved to be of interest, it was of less use to the study than the researcher expected because data from senior leaders is different to data from middle leaders and so its inclusion within the Data

Presentation tends to muddy the waters. Thus, apart from one or two key items of data from the senior team which make a significant contribution to the piece, and which are clearly marked, the data presented is drawn exclusively from the middle leaders interviewed. The early part of the programme of interviews was with those middle leaders who were within their first 18 months of appointment to post, and it is from these that the first cycle coding was undertaken. During the first six months of the interview programme (May – October 2013) the researcher toyed with the idea of expanding the study into other schools and records this in his journal. On 7th October 2013, he made the decision to limit the case to the bounds of the single school the reasons being that the case as it stood was clearly bounded – if he went into a maintained secondary school, an all girls' school, a primary school, etc. what would be the justification for choosing them other than the fact that he knew the headteacher and so would have access. It also became apparent that with up to 25 potential participants within his own school plus a decent cohort from a further three or four schools, the task of interviewing and transcribing alone would become an unwieldy task even before the coding commenced. On 7th October 2013 wrote in his journal '*All interviewees to come from within the school*' (page 302).

As the researcher continued his interviewing and transcribing, he became aware that the cohort he was interviewing who were in the early stages of their appointment 'didn't know what they didn't know, and he took the decision to widen his study to those middle leaders who had been in post for longer than 18 months. By and large, these participants reported similar challenges than those more recently appointed, however, being more experienced, they were able to report on a richer seam of experience. Some of the longer standing participants had also worked in other schools both independent and maintained, and so were able to flesh their stories out with comparisons to other contexts. The researcher found that everyone approached was willing to give an interview, and two participants put themselves forward when they heard of the study. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and an hour, with the norm being circa 40 minutes. The researcher was aware throughout of the power asymmetry in that he had control of the dialogue (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009), and in a conscious effort to counter this, set out to ask the fewest and most open-ended questions he could in order to elicit the data he was seeking (see interview transcript, Appendix VI). Whilst the researcher cannot substantiate it, he felt that the richest data tended to appear during the middle of the interview, during the period 10 minutes – 30

minutes. This phenomenon appeared fairly consistent, and the researcher surmised that, for the first ten minutes or so, participants were conscious of the voice recorder, and a little cautious about what they said, and during the last ten minutes, the discussion either tailed off because they had said everything they needed to which was relevant, or they took the discussion up a gear because they wanted to get something off their chest! Whilst the initial interview questions stuck quite closely to the interview schedules (appendices III & IV), as the process unfurled, and the coding congealed, the interviewer found himself asking participants more specific questions in order to flesh out particular areas of enquiry. After the 25th interview the researcher sensed that he had reached theoretical saturation, the point at which no further information was likely to add to the coding (Lichtman, 2013).

4:5 Coding

Coding began after the first five interviews had been undertaken. This coding set the data from the transcripts against the five propositions because it gave the researcher a clear framework within which to work. This was the initial stage in the first cycle of a system of structural coding as expounded by Saldaña in that the researcher tagged or classified an item of data according to a topic of inquiry relating to a specific interview question (Saldaña, 2013). Fig 1. is an extract from the researcher's journal dated 30th May 2013. The proposition (Proposition IV) is written at the top of the page. The list of twelve statements are those that have been picked out by the researcher as he has read through the transcripts, and the number (circled) next to them is the anonymised participant. Where there is more than one circled number next to the statement, then this is a record of the participants who have made similar comments. It quickly became apparent, as can be seen by this journal extract, that the data did substantiate the propositions and that, as a temporary construct they had performed the role required. On reflection, and in the light of the incoming data, the researcher would make slight changes to the propositions, and this is discussed later in the next chapter.

30th May 2013

Proposition IV A programme of support for leaders in their formative period of development has the potential to bridge some of the capability gap.

① 'Pick up the baton' (P1) 'Sink or swim' (P5)

② Very little currently done. (P1, P2)   'We assume too much' (P3)(P3)

③ Currently done by osmosis - but it works. (P1) (P5)

④ Support is there but it is informal. (P1)(P1)

⑤ Formal is desirable. (P1) (P2) (P3) (P3) (P3)

⑥ Shadow me. (P1)(P4)(P5)

⑦ Away Days are beneficial. (P2)(P5)   ← Ask questions, deal with scenarios.

⑧ Leadership capacity is not fixed - it can be developed. (P2) (P2) (P2)(P3)(P3)

⑨ Leaders need to be challenged. (P2)

⑩ Formal handover period. (P5)(P5)

⑪ Mentor (P5)

⑫ Leaders would benefit from formal time for structured reflection

(164)

Fig 2. First cycle coding (against propositions)

The initial interviews also revealed codes that were not related to the propositions, and the researcher rapidly built up a wide range of individual codes which he could identify within the data. This information led to two developments. First, as the constantly refined coding emerged, it informed the interview schedule which, over time, became more bespoke as the researcher asked specific questions of particular participants in order to focus in on certain aspects of the study. This aligns with the work of Glaser and Straus (1967) who noted that, as data comes in, it will inform the researcher of what to collect next and where to find it, thus the data collection is informed by the emerging theory. Second, once the researcher had a critical mass of codes, he was able to further group these codes into themes. This is the second cycle of coding as described by Saldaña, and is illustrated by the page taken from his journal (Fig. 2). On this page, the code is written in the middle column under the heading 'New Code'. In the next column is the title 'Old Code' showing that the coding is being developed in the light of new data coming in alloyed with constant interpretation by the researcher. The first column entitled 'Section' is the higher level (second cycle) coding and, as can be seen clearly, each of these sections has a number of the more finely grained codes. The title 'Section' was subsequently renamed 'Themes' by the researcher. The column 'New Code' has two numbers, the first of which is the number of the theme, the second is the number of the code within that theme i.e. 2:5 is the second theme (factors that directly influence the leader), fifth code (career implications). As the transcripts were read, the researcher identified and picked out the relevant text as it related to the original research question. These were then cut and pasted into a separate document which, over time expanded and developed into a wide range of codes (Annex VIII is an exemplar of one of these coding categories). Over a two-year period, as the data corpus grew, the coding became ever more refined, culminating in circa 750 items of coded data. These were indexed to 40 individual codes, nested within 6 themes (the full list is located in Appendix VII). Whilst this process is not Grounded Theory in that the researcher did not go into the study tabula rasa, but rather had a clear framework through the propositions, it does draw on the work of Glaser and Straus (1967) in that the researcher has picked a specific group for the collection of data, undertaken first and second cycle coding, and brought theory, and a new and helpful perspective to the discourse on middle leadership.

Re coding:

20ᵗʰ August 2013

Section.	New code.		Old code.	Sub theme.
	1:1	Defining leadership	—	1
	1:2	The importance of leadership. (Educational)	1:2	2
	1:3	Context: Independent education.	1:1	3
Section 1.	1:4	Context: The organisational structure.	3:8	4
Contextual	1:5	Context: Distribution of the leadership.	2:1	5
factors.	1:6	Context: Who are the middle leaders?	2:2	6
	1:7	Context: Autonomy.	2:6	7
	1:8	Context: What do middle leaders do?	2:3	8
Section 2.	2:1	Expectations of the organisation.	—	9
Factors that	2:2	Accountability. of the middle leader.	2:5	10
impact directly	2:3	Authority. (lack of)	2:4	11
onto middle	2:4	Time	3:1	12
leaders.	2:5	Career implications (arguably not directly relevant to the research question)	1:3	13
Section 3	3:1	Followers. (and the issues that they bring.)	3:2	14
Factors that impact	3:2	Culture (We've always done it this way).	3:5	15
indirectly through	3:3	Web (Complex matrix of leadership).	3:4	16
followers.	4:1	Influence / Vision (& communication?)	6:7	17 / 18
Section 4.	4:2	Job descriptions.	4:1	18
The enabling	4:3	The desirable qualities of a leader.	4:4	19
factors or	4:4	Viva la difference.	4:5	20
capabilities.	4:5	Knowledge, perspectives & traits.	4:3	21
	4:6	Self reflection.	6:14	22
	4:7	Tapping into the experience of others.	4:8	23
	4:8	Wider personal experience.	4:9	24
	4:9 / 4:10	These capabilities can be developed.	5:2	25
Section 5	5:1	A moral imperative. (+ learning curve). / Our current provision is laissez-faire.	6:1 / 5:1	26 / 27
Formal programme.	5:2	Learning on the job.	4:2 + 4:7	28
	5:3	A more formal programme would be advantageous.	5:3	29
	5:4			30

(231)

Fig 3. Second cycle coding

4:6 Summary

The researcher has, in this chapter, described the research design as a process, underpinned by the methodology, to explore the research question. He has described the interviewing process, explaining some of the challenges faced and the decisions made. The structure of the interview schedule is based on the propositions which in turn were developed from the review of the literature, and is designed to give an insightful appreciation of the phenomena that are to be found within leadership in the independent sector (Yin, 2012). The researcher has attempted to construct and record a study that describes phenomena in their natural context (Bassey, 1999). Whether this sector appears any different to other sectors is for the reader to decide through their own engagement, interpretation and evaluation of the findings as recorded in the following chapter, transferring their own knowledge, experience and values to what they read (Denscombe, 2010).

The case as a thick description does not in itself give sufficient information to fully inform the original research question which asks whether effective support mechanisms can be identified for middle leaders in the sector. To do this, the researcher elected to take the data from the interviews and undertake a process of constant comparative coding of the data in order to identify potential support mechanisms, using the position of the critical realist in that he produced the data from a positivist standpoint, subsequently interpreting his findings from an interpretivist standpoint, thus combining the lenses of scientist and philosopher (Denscombe, 2010; Denzin and Lincoln, 2008; Sayer, 2000). He has shown how the coding took place in accordance with established research methods by undertaking an initial or first cycle coding against the propositions, expanded this to establish further coding, and then grouped these codes into higher level codes or themes during the second cycle coding (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000; Glaser and Straus, 1967; Lichtman, 2013; Saldaña, 2013). Having explained the methodology that underpins his study, and the methods by which he elicited the knowledge he was searching for, the next chapter presents the data which have emerged from the interview schedule, linking them to the relevant literature where appropriate, combined with an analysis of the findings through the lens of a practitioner researcher.

Chapter 5: Data Presentation and Analysis

5:1 Introduction

The researcher begins this chapter by restating the original research question: *Can effective support mechanisms be identified for those in the formative stages of middle leadership in the secondary independent sector?* The researcher has chosen to bring the findings and the analysis together in one chapter rather than, as is more conventional, separate these out into two different chapters. The reason for this is that the coding of the data splits into quite a large number of component parts, each of which is discussed separately. If the findings were to be located in one chapter and the analysis in the next, then the reader would find themselves constantly referring back and forth between the two. A further advantage in constructing the chapter in this manner is that the relevant literature can be drawn in to inform the component parts, thus enabling the reader to see data, analysis and literature grouped together in an organised and logical manner.

From this discussion of the literature, a series of five propositions was drawn up. These were framed as 'temporary conceptual tools' (Thomas, 2011), and were designed as a conceptual structure or framework around which the researcher could build his interview schedule. The propositions developed were as follows:

Proposition I: Middle leadership is important to the school.

Proposition II: There are specific capabilities that are required by middle leaders.

Proposition III: The capabilities required for leadership within a school context are not necessarily the same as those needed for a classroom teacher. There is an identifiable 'capability gap'.

Proposition IV: A programme of support for leaders in their formative period of development has the potential to bridge some of the capability gap.

Proposition V: Such a programme has the potential to benefit the individual, the sub unit (department) and the school.

The interview schedule for each of the interviewees addressed these propositions in turn (see appendices III & IV). Depending on the researcher's knowledge of the participant, and the stage of the study, the researcher would place a greater or lesser emphasis on different propositions, however in general terms, all questions put to the participants were anchored

in the propositions. Whilst this was the boundary set by the interviewer, the participants saw fit to take their thoughts and opinions in a myriad of different directions, all of which were recorded by the interviewer, and subsequently transcribed. This meant that there was a significant amount of 'white noise' in the transcriptions. To help counter this, the researcher began his coding by using the five propositions only. He contends that, through the filter of a different research question, an enquirer would be able to pick a range of different data out of the transcriptions, however the researcher has been disciplined and fastidious throughout, in tying his coding back to the original research question. In this chapter, the researcher uses the coded data from the interviews in order to build a picture of the case, one which fully describes many of the key aspects of middle-leadership in the school within an independent school. The researcher divides this description into three parts. First, he uses findings from the interview schedule to build a 'thick description' of the context within which the study is based. The researcher does this in order to give the reader some reference points against which they can view the study relevant to their own experience. The researcher makes no claim for generalisability of his findings, however if the reader understands the backdrop against which the study is based, it may be easier for them to contrast and compare with their own experience. Second, the researcher sets the data against the propositions that were propounded at the end of the literature review; this underpins the *why* of middle leadership development within the case. Third, the researcher uses further themes that have emerged from the data that point to the *how* of a proposed middle leadership development programme.

The researcher uses this chapter to analyse data in furtherance of his two main objectives. First, the researcher aims to give a clear picture to the reader of middle-leadership in an independent school, an area of educational research that is currently woefully lacking (Harvey, 2007; Harvey, 2015). Second, he is looking to identify different aspects of middle-leadership, particularly as they are experienced by those during the transitional period once they have been first appointed, looking to see which aspects of leadership at this level could and should be addressed in a programme of development for newly appointed middle-leaders. A reason for doing this is that, whilst there is a significant corpus of research into senior leadership in schools, there is very little into middle-leadership (Spillane at al., 1999; Thorpe and Bennett-Powell, 2014), and possibly no study whatsoever into the transitional period as classroom teacher moves into a leadership role for the first

time. Both objectives are embedded within the research question, and each helps to address a 'blank spot' in the current research in that they illuminate two specific areas that have been hitherto neglected (Gough, 2002).

From the propositions, the researcher was able to develop a series of questions to be posed during a schedule of semi structured interviews. In accordance with the research design described in the previous chapter, the researcher undertook 20 interviews of middle leaders, and five with senior leaders in the independent school within which the case is bounded, and this took place over a 22-month period between May 2013 and March 2015. Fig 2 shows the order in which the participants were interviewed. The first three interviews were with senior leaders (headteacher and two deputy headteachers), followed by five participants who, with the exception of one, had less than 18 months of experience in the middle leadership role they held. There then follow six participants with two years or less in post, followed by four participants who each had a significant length of time as a middle leader. Finally, there are two further interviews with senior leaders (deputy heads) who were appointed during the interview schedule, and two further middle leaders who were also appointed during this period. Each interview lasted between 30 minutes and one hour, with about 40 minutes being the usual length. Participants were invariably willing to cooperate and appeared to speak freely. They all appeared eager to speak in confidence, and a number wished to take the opportunity to get things off their chest. Although the questions asked were similar throughout, they were interpreted in different ways by the participants, sometimes leading to data that the researcher was not expecting, and which enriched the study accordingly.

The researcher began coding the transcriptions of the interviews after the fifth interview, and undertook this first coding by using the five propositions as a template to search for statements that would either confirm or contradict each proposition (Researcher's Journal, 30th May 2013). As the interviews were undertaken and recorded, significantly more codes appeared than had been anticipated by the researcher, and as they did so, they informed his interview schedule, thus enabling him to adapt the interview questions as the schedule proceeded. The findings revealed a series of 'clusters' of data from which this narrative has been formed, and so the researcher starts this chapter by using data from the interviews to provide a backdrop to the work that follows, providing a description of the school as seen through the eyes of the middle leaders. He then locates the middle leaders within the

Participant	Role	Date interviewed	Role experience at time of interview
1	SLT	17:05:2013	2 years in post + previous schools
2	SLT	20:05:2013	10 years in post, 35+ years in the school
3	SLT	21:05:2013	6 years in post + previous schools
4	Head of Year	23:05:2013	9 months in post + previous school/career
5	Head of Year	24:05:2013	9 months in post, 6 years at school
6	Extra-curricular	11:06:2013	10 months in post, retired from 40 years teaching
7	Academic Dept	27:06:2013	3 years in post, 6 years at school
8	Extra-curricular	27:06:2013	9 months in post
9	Head of Year	08:07:2013	1 year in post, 3 years at school
10	Extra-curricular	15:07:2013	2 years in post, 12 years at school
11	Extra-curricular	17:07:2013	2 years in post, 18 years at school
12	Academic Dept	10:10:2013	18 months in post, 8 years at school
13	Academic Dept	12:11:2013	2 years in post, 20 years at school
14	Academic Dept	22:11:2013	18 months in post + previous schools
15	Academic Dept	10:12:2013	4 months in post + previous school
16	Academic Dept	04:06:2014	5 years in post + previous school
17	Academic Dept	19:06:2014	26 years in post
18	Academic Dept	01:07:2014	21 years in post
19	Academic Dept	04:07:2014	9 years in post + previous schools
20	Supporting Dept	08:07:2014	12 years in post + previous schools
21	SLT	10:12:2014	18 months in post, 10 in school + previous schools
22	SLT	15:01:2015	5 months in post, 4 previous schools
23	Head of Year	10:02:2015	17 months in post
24	Academic Dept	02:03:2015	7 months in post + previous schools
25	Academic Dept	16:03:2015	19 months in post + previous schools

Fig 4. Interviewees and roles

school, using their own words to describe the work that they do. Building on this pen picture, the researcher takes each of the propositions, and uses the data from the interviews to discuss the credibility or otherwise of each of them. These propositions have provided the foundation upon which the interview questions were built, thus enabling the researcher to collect data and build theory from what he saw, heard and recorded (Denscombe, 2010; Walliman, 2011).

The coding process used by the researcher employed a constant comparative process using a method of initial coding followed by a subsequent second cycle coding which enabled the codes to be organised into a smaller and more select list of themes (Saldaña 2013). The structure of this chapter follows closely the narrative that grew out of the coding from the interviews, and relates it throughout to the literature review. Thus, these analyses and conclusions link back to the interview data which is directed by the propositions which themselves were constructed from the findings of the literature review which was bounded by the original research question. At any point, it can be seen how all parts of the study link back to the research question, and at each stage the researcher has made the steps transparent and auditable, so ensuring that any subsequent researcher could see from where conclusions had been drawn (Yin, 2009). Through this process, the researcher makes the case for the need for a programme of leadership development within the school, explaining both *why* this is of importance in preparation for the next chapter which discusses *how* this could be enabled. In this chapter, the researcher also undertakes an analysis of the 'thick description' that has been recorded in the Data Presentation, drawing on the literature review in order to help tease out some of the key aspects of middle leadership in the school within which the study is based.

Throughout the chapter, the researcher adopts the stance of the Critical Realist where, having used the tools of the social scientist to explore and describe the case, he takes the vantage point of the philosopher to interpret that which he has found (Denscombe, 2010). As the researcher demonstrates, the propositions were successful in that they provided the structure needed in order to keep the interview schedule bounded within the confines of the research question, although as the researcher explains in this chapter, the responses from the interviews subsequently informed and fine-tuned the accuracy and appropriateness of the propositions. In the third part of this chapter, the researcher analyses those factors uncovered during the coding process that both make middle

leadership a challenge, and which make it possible, particularly during the transitional period as the newly promoted teacher goes from leading and managing classes of children to leading and managing their peers. In the final section of this chapter, the researcher uses the data presentation and literature review to draw conclusions about key aspects of leadership development, and from which he makes recommendations about potential development programmes. The interviews and coding were conducted over a period of some 22 months, and during this period, the researcher continued to explore the relevant literature, partly as new work was being published in the relevant journals during this period, and partly as the data informed the coding which subsequently set the researcher off, following new lines of enquiry. An example of this (recorded in his journal) is the further reading undertaken into the subject of vision, what is it and how can it be formulated and articulated (October 2014).

Through the analyses undertaken in this chapter, the researcher adds to the understanding of middle leadership in a school. Whilst the situation of each middle leader, context within which they operate, and team member they lead is different, paradoxically the data presented shows that they also have much in common, and the researcher unpicks some of these issues in order to recommend a development programme that has enough commonality to make it achievable, whilst having enough flexibility to enable individuals to access it from their own perspective.

5:2 Context: The school

The school was founded in 1620 and is located within the suburbs of a major city in the North West of England. It is a single sex institution, with approximately 600 boys between the ages of 11 and 18, of whom one 150 are in the sixth form. It is part of a larger family of schools that include a Girls' school, a Junior school and an Infants' school, all contained on three separate sites that are within half a mile of one another. The catchment area is large, with buses conveying boys to and from the school in journeys up to 90 minutes each way. There are approximately 60 staff on the role, of which 15 are part time. The management of the school is structured in such a way that the overall leader on a day-to-day basis is the Headmaster who had been in post nine years as the interview schedule commenced. He has two Deputy Head teachers, one of whom oversees academic matters whilst the other pastoral. There is significant overlap between these two as, for example, an issue at home (pastoral) will frequently impact on school work (academic). The next tier within the

management structure is that of Group Tutors. These are senior staff who overarch Heads of Departments, and include a Teaching and Learning Coordinator, Staff Development Coordinator, Head of Ys 12 & 13, Head of Ys 10 & 11 and Head of Ys 7,8 & 9. Below this are the heads of academic departments, individual year groups and extra-curricular activities (i.e. Rugby, Hockey, Rowing). Entrance to the Boys' school is via an examination which is held in the February of Y6. The school is fee paying, however with its own bursary fund, approximately 25% of boys in each year will have a proportion of their fees supported by the school. Public exam results have been consistently high over many years, with the governors of the school currently setting a target of 80% grade A or B at A2 level, and 60% grade A* to A at GCSE. 95% of boys go to university at the end of the sixth form, with 60% of these going to Russell Group universities, the most common courses being Engineering, Medicine, Law and Economics. As is confirmed by a number of the participants, these factors are important to the school. For example:

> *The parents that send their kids here, by and large, are sending them to us because they see us as a conduit to the top universities, and in sending their son to a top university.* (Participant 14)

Furthermore, the school provides rich extra-curricular opportunities for the boys, most particularly in sport, music, the Combined Cadet Force, drama and Duke of Edinburgh scheme. Notably, as a part of the overall educational package on which the school markets itself, it also prides itself on the pastoral care that it offers the boys. That the school is independent of local authority or direct government control means that it may be viewed as a commercial concern in the business of selling high quality education, and because the school places itself in the marketplace primarily on its academic reputation, there is an expectation by parents and families that the school will deliver results in the public exams. This can create a tension between the expectations of the parents and the ability of the boys to deliver, and has the potential to place significant pressure on all teachers but, as the researcher demonstrates later, most particularly those in positions of academic leadership. This discrepancy can sometimes take those who are new to the teaching staff by surprise:

> *I had a preconceived idea about the school which did not actually match up to what the school was like when I got here.* (Participant 20)

> *…but because the presentation of the school is so cleverly modelled, and the reputation and how people outside feel about the school …the reality is more complicated than that. I think people need to understand the reality of it, to be able to withstand the challenge of the difficulties here.* (Participant 18)

This is an interesting phenomenon, and the researcher has not spotted anything similar in the literature review. As such, it may be something that exists in other schools, but which is not recorded; or it may be indicative of the independent sector in general; or it may be a nuance of the particular school within which the study is based; or it could be that the researcher has interviewed a cohort of middle leaders who hold a unique view.

That the school is truly independent is something of a misnomer, and the reason for this is that it is bound by much of the same legislation that governs the maintained sector; Child Protection, Safeguarding and Health & Safety would be such examples:

> *The first change was forced on us, when the government changed from coursework to controlled assessments.* (Participant 14)

What the school teaches and how it teaches it are, within reason, up to the school, and in this way, it is independent of outside agencies. That said, a key influence in the curriculum design is the expectation of parents, many of whom are professional, and expect a diet of traditional subjects. This curricular independence from local authority or government is seen by some of those interviewed to be a significant advantage, because they perceive that this relieves them from some of the constraints of bureaucracy, giving them the freedom to deliver teaching and learning as they see best through deciding on the curriculum and the direction that the department is to take. The autonomy that this gives middle leaders is clearly appreciated in some quarters, and perhaps most noticeably in those who have come to the school from the maintained sector, and who can see the contrast most keenly:

> *And I think that was the biggest difference I found when I came here; you were given autonomy to deliver things the way you felt happiest to do.* (Participant 19)

> *We are much freer; I am free to make the decisions I want. So, in some ways I like the freedom, which is much the part and parcel of the independent sector.* (Participant 20)

This perceived freedom for a middle-leader to make their own decisions is an area where the evidence suggests that there is a difference between this independent school and its maintained sector counterparts, although the researcher acknowledges that he does not have any empirical research from other institutions with which he can draw more concrete conclusions.

Two key points that come out of this short discussion on the school context are that there appears in some quarters to be a disparity between the image that the school likes to sell to the outside world; and that the freedom to decide on curriculum and teaching approaches is one that is appreciated, most particularly by those who have worked in the maintained sector. Having articulated a flavour of the context within which the study is based, the researcher now turns to the middle leaders, using data from the interview schedule to build a thick description of their roles.

5:3 Context: Distributing the leadership

The Headmaster of the school is appointed by, and accountable to, the Board of Governors, and is seen by pupils, parents and staff as the overall leader the school. Because of the size and complexity of the school, it is too much for him to handle alone, and so he distributes a wide range of tasks to different people in line with the observations of previous research (Brundrett, 1999; OECD, 2008), thus the leadership within the school is distributed in a recognisable format that is formal, organised and structured. It is the Headmaster's view that he delegates the both the autonomy and the responsibility for a wide range of aspects of the school on a day to day basis to other members of staff as observed in other schools (Coleman, 2005; Harris, 2004; Leithwood et al., 1999). Middle leaders not only take responsibility for the children that they teach, but they also take responsibility for other adults. As will be seen later in this section, whilst classroom teachers are used to leading and managing children, the leading and managing of other adults requires different skills again, and this is one of the defining parts of the middle leader's role. Because of the school's emphasis on extra-curricular activities, heads of sports and other activities were deemed to be middle leaders also. Middle leaders then, for the case of this study, are those who lead other adults in an academic department, pastoral role or as part of their extra-curricular activities, yet also answer to the senior leadership within the school, thus aligning with the literature (Bush, 2003; Busher et al., 2007; OECD, 2008).

The Headmaster holds the view that he distributes the leadership, giving them autonomy and responsibility in the process as identified by Northouse (2016). However, this autonomy is not necessarily recognised by every middle leader to whom the Headmaster thinks he has delegated it to, with one seasoned participant observing:

…but that's his style, he does micromanage. (Participant 13)

The researcher's observation is that the degree to which the Headmaster is prepared to actually relinquish power to others within the school (as opposed to distributing the leadership through formal job titles) depends on his trust in the individuals, and this relates to the observations of Bergman et al. (2012) who report that where leadership is distributed, there is less conflict, more consensus, more trust and greater cohesion than would otherwise be the case. Certainly, those participants who felt that they had a high level of autonomy granted to them by the headteacher appeared to be happier with their lot than those whose perception was that they were micromanaged. Of course, there is an argument to be had that the headteacher does in fact treat them all the same, and it is the individual perceptions that are in fact different. Thus, whilst the leadership may appear to be evenly distributed through the school, the contours of power are influenced by interpersonal relationships. Not only is the leadership distributed down to the middle leader, but it then flows on to the individual members of the department, and again there are differences of opinion as to how much autonomy there actually is. One pastoral head commented:

So, it's basically trusting them to get on with the job. (Participant 4)

However, a member of a different pastoral team made the following observation of his line manager:

I find that situations are often dealt with by individuals who, though very well meaning, do not have the background information or understanding of what is happening on the front line. (Participant 9)

It appears then that way in which power, autonomy and responsibility are distributed within the school is very dependent upon the individual gatekeepers, and not only that, but the gatekeeper may perceive the situation quite differently to their team members. This gives a more nuanced angle on the findings of Day et al. (2004) who noted that shared leadership occurs when individual members of the team take on tasks in support of

maximising the team's performance. In this case, the overall leader (the headteacher) clearly has influence on the degree to which individuals can exert influence through their leadership. This balance between delegating power whilst retaining responsibility can be a tricky one for middle leaders, and one participant commented on just how difficult they find it:

> *The most difficult thing about leadership is truly distributing the leadership to the people beneath you. It's difficult because, ultimately, you are the one who carries the can. And so, with all good intentions, if you empower people beneath you, who then don't come up to your expectations or standards, then what you do is end up clawing all that back in, it's just a natural thing, it's a preservation thing. You claw it back in, and you end up doing it yourself.* (Participant 14)

It appears then, that a key factor in the distribution of leadership is the level of personal trust that a leader, whether senior leader or middle leader, has in the individual person that they are distributing the leadership to. If the personal trust is high, then the person to whom the leadership is distributed will enjoy a degree of autonomy, however if the level of personal trust is low, then the person may find themselves more closely managed, circumvented or ignored. It is highly probable that this level of trust may be dependent on a number of factors that may include the leader's experience, their perception of trustworthiness of others, and their willingness to accept risk. It is probably also influenced by the person to whom the responsibility is being delegated: their ability to understand the remit expected of them, their record of reliability and their own skill level, and this aligns with the findings of Amos and Klimoski (2014) who noted that team members take on a degree of risk when they step forward into a leadership position, and this in itself requires a level of personal courage. One participant described the potential dangers of not distributing the leadership, particularly if the leader is charismatic and successful:

> *But the problem with that style of leadership is once that leader goes, because he or she was the focal point of all change and all drive, once that person's gone, it can actually do a lot of damage to the institution as a whole. So, you might get short term, medium term gains from this charismatic leader, but then if he goes, there are no structures underneath him, there's no second layer of leaders coming through, to take his place, so you get a very sharp decline institutionally.* (Participant 14)

Whatever the details, it is clear from the data that the distribution of leadership within the school is certainly influenced by interpersonal dynamics, possibly more so than the wider literature has so far uncovered, and it is suggested that this is an area ripe for further study.

5:4 Context: The role of the middle leader

An overarching message that came back from the interviews was that the middle leaders are a diverse group of people who not only have different roles, but who also see themselves quite differently from one another. It is a complex role, frequently reactive, and the day to day practicalities of middle leadership tend not to be so clearly cut for the middle leader, with it being in the nature of the role that:

> *Some of the things that crop up, you just wouldn't ever be able to predict.* (Participant 8)

This supports the observation by Turner (2007) who stated that making generalisations of middle leaders may be of limited value. However, there was little consistency about this aspect of self-perception amongst those interviewed. Some saw themselves as being managers, primarily taking responsibility for:

> *…all of the admin bits, so budgeting, timetable allocation, mentoring new members of staff, being on hand to offer advice to my colleagues if they need it, organising all the enrichment activities and trips, being in charge of departmental budgets.* (Participant 7)

Some of those interviewed (although not all) referred to the leadership aspect of their role:

> *…I've got, in my own mind, longer term plans and a vision for the department.* (Participant 15)

> *…and an approachability, even if you're incredibly tired and frustrated, the idea of constantly being approachable to your department.* (Participant 15)

The researcher would suggest that, from the data that emerged from the case, all middle leaders have a responsibility for both management and leadership roles within their domains, supporting the 'co-dimensionality' referred to by Simonet and Tett (2012), (see also Gunter, (2001) and Van Velso and McCauley (2004)) and supporting the contention that, for leaders within schools, the neglect of managerial tasks will result in difficulties in leading (Spillane et al., 1999). They all have to both lead people and manage assets,

however the researcher, on reading the transcriptions and subsequent coding noted that there is quite a range of responses when this matter is discussed. This is a distinction that few of the middle leaders have given much, if any, time to and the view can be taken that middle leaders don't need to know the difference, they just need to get on with both keeping their staff in order, and ordering the text books. However, it may be advantageous for there to be an awareness of the distinction between managing assets and leading people and, as the researcher demonstrates later, an understanding that there is an expectation (if tacit rather than explicit through the job description) that they will lead other adults.

5:5 Context: Teaching remains the core task

It is of note that of the first 20 participants interviewed, 17 referred to the boys that they teach, some at considerable length, whilst others kept pulling the interview back to the centrality of boys in their work, and the importance of the boys and of teaching. While he was interviewing middle leaders, the researcher noted that participants would keep bringing the interview back to their professional relationship with the boys when he was hoping that they would refer to the leadership of the adults within their team. He made the mistake of assuming that this step change moved the middle leader away from having the direct teaching of children as their priority, whereas middle leaders in this case took the responsibility for leading other adults *in addition to* their role as a teacher of children:

> …*that's where my heart is, my heart is right there for experiences for the boys.* (Participant 25)

> *I think my teaching is still my major priority.* (Participant 16)

This should perhaps not be of any surprise, as they are all teachers who spend much of their working week in a classroom or on a sports field, teaching adolescent boys, and so aligns with the assertion of Crowther (1997 & 2009) who observed than an historical failure of educational theorists to recognise leadership dimensions within teachers' work may be partly attributable to the continued insistence of successful teachers that their primary concern is that of teaching. The researcher could find no references other than Crowther in the literature review that pointed the researcher in the direction of looking at a link between the middle leader and the boys, if anything it sent him looking in the opposite direction. The researcher's third proposition states that '*The capabilities required for*

leadership within a school context are not necessarily the same as those needed by a classroom teacher: there is an identifiable 'Capability Gap'' (Researcher's Journal, 30th May 2013), and it was perhaps this focus on teachers and their capabilities that caused the researcher to have such a blind spot and explains why he missed the importance of the pupils to middle leaders for so long. The researcher observes that a part of the reason for this paucity of research is that the bulk of international empirical study concerns senior leadership, and because Head Teachers and Principals are further removed from classroom teaching than middle leaders, the matter arises less frequently. Whilst he had noticed the pattern quite early on in the interview schedule, it was not until the twentieth interview had been transcribed that he began to realise the significance of it, and so at that point he retraced his steps to code the transcripts looking for this specific coding. This comes over with both the quantity and quality of the references to the boys that are contained within the interviews; in the end, 22 of the 25 participants drew the conversations back to the boys at some point, and a total of 53 references were made by them.

That the boys are central to the middle leaders' role was further emphasised by strength of the language that they used:

> *…it's fundamental to know the boys well.* (Participant 4)

There was a sense amongst these participants that a personal rapport between the middle leader and the boys remained an essential component of their tool kit as a teacher, with one participant speaking of having empathy with them whilst another spoke of being approachable and having an 'open door' policy that enabled boys to build a professional relationship with them. This caring, informed stance was reinforced with a belief that the middle leader should have the best interest of the boys at heart, or as one participant coined it 'customer service':

> *If you invest time in them* (the boys) *as I do… then it's much easier for you in the classroom because they know you care about them, you're going to give up your time. They know I have their best interest at heart.* (Participant 5)

That the boys are at the heart of the work of the middle leader was encapsulated by one participant:

> *…the things that are ultimately going to affect the boys' teaching are the things that I prioritise above everything else.* (Participant 16)

This rather fundamental perspective was underpinned by a further participant who brought the interview on their middle leadership back to the classroom:

I would say the most important job is being in the classroom. (Participant 20)

This thread was then taken to departmental meetings where participants spoke of the ultimate aims of such a forum:

…one of the first things I did was bring in weekly meetings… so there could be a discussion of the department… but also discussing how we might make the learning experience better and more productive for the boys here. (Participant 16)

It is clear from the findings that the middle leaders in this school place their pupils at the heart of what they do, and it is within the context of the classroom (in the widest term, including laboratories and sports fields for example). This aspect of the study is, the researcher contends, of wider interest. The evidence that middle leaders put their pupils at the centre of all that they do is clearly very strong in this case, and he would suggest that this is an area that is worthy of further study, both in the independent and maintained sectors.

5:6 Context: Power

In essence, the power that leaders exert enables them to influence another party (Busher and Harris, 2000; Yukl, 2010), and there are two factors that give a leader power. The first is the authority vested in them by the organisation, and the second is the influence that they can bring to bear on their followers (Bush, 2011; Jackson and Parry, 2011; Northouse, 2016). With this in mind, the researcher's interview questions were couched in terms that invited the participants to comment on both facets. The responses were consistent, and participants were unanimous in their view that it is influence that enables them to exert power over those around them, contesting the view of McMahon (2016) that traditional associations of leadership and authority remain, and are difficult to shift. It was also a consistent theme amongst the participants that attempting to use the authority of their position to tell other teachers what to do is not a suitable way to lead them:

I think, because I'm dealing with adults, whose commitment is variable, and who are a bit sensitive, and a bit touchy, I have to be conscious if I was at all heavy handed or blunt, it would undermine what I was trying to do. And therefore, the

power vested in me as head of department, is a power that I try to wield very dextrously indeed. (Participant 18)

So, it is quite clear that the only realistic way in which this middle leader could exercise power over other teachers was by the judicious use of their influence. When probed further about this, a point that was made by a number of the participants was that they would draw the team members into decision making processes in order to gain consensus and to encourage team members to become stakeholders. This was particularly the case for one participant who inherited his rather eclectic team of very experienced staff whilst in his twenties.

I was well aware that I had a member of my department who had been a head of department and a very senior teacher in the school who had worked for numerous exam boards. I've got the headmaster in my department, and I had two part-timers that had been around the block and done plenty of history teaching, so I wanted to engage a collegiate atmosphere. (Participant 16)

It is clear from this statement (which is reflected in the responses from other respondents) that the middle leader is looking to lead through consensus, and exert the power that he needs to through his influence. As he further remarked, to try to lay the law down at the beginning, without recourse to discussion would have run the risk of alienating his staff from him, thus reducing his opportunity for eliciting support from them:

…it would have been foolhardy of me to come in and just say 'Well actually, we're going to do things this way. (Participant 16)

Another participant spoke of the need to get to know colleagues before beginning to push them around, and the need for establishing emotional ground. So, the strength comes, not so much from the position that they hold, but the strength that comes from being able to hold the respect of others. That this currency is 'dynamic' suggests that it has the potential to constantly flux, and so needs to be worked at in order for the leader to maintain its value. Having power can be gratifying:

I like having the power to make decisions. (Participant 25)

Thus far the researcher has taken data from the interviews to illuminate the context that the study is based in, and to consider some of the wider issues of middle leadership within the school. He has shown that middle leadership does indeed exist within the school, it is

acknowledged as such by the senior leaders, and generally recognised by those who hold middle leadership positions, although some of them consider themselves managers rather than leaders. Next, he turns his attention to the five propositions or temporary conceptual tools (Thomas, 2011) to see the extent to which they are supported or contended by the data drawn from the interviews.

5:7 Proposition I. Middle leadership is important to the school

This proposition was drawn up in order to make the level of importance of middle leadership within the school explicit, and was based on two themes drawn from the literature. The first theme is that leadership has a significant influence on the quality of classroom teaching in a school (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003; Busher and Harris, 2000; OECD, 2008). Being an academic institution which, as has been demonstrated, markets itself primarily on the basis of its exam results, this was readily acknowledged by participants:

> *…the aim of the department, as sad as it seems, is to maximise the potential of each kid and the result of that will be excellent grades at GCSE and A level.* (Participant 14)

This aligns with the view of the Department for Education and Skills (2105) who state that exam results are a key role of the middle leader, and confirms the contention of Gunter (2001) that teaching and learning is measured increasingly by external measures. For the head of an academic department, their aim is pretty straightforward, excellent results in public examinations, whilst they retain much freedom to use their own judgement as to how to best achieve that aim. Because the focus is on enabling boys to get the best exam results they can, middle leaders use school or departmental data to identify those boys who may need the most support:

> *…so I might say, look, at the start of the year, we might identify a dozen boys, and say, what's our aim with those students so by the time they get to the end of a term or an academic year, and then I probably have more long term goals which is how do I want to develop the department with the staff that I have.* (Participant 12)

This then is a key role of this middle leader; the identification of those boys who need the most work in order for the department to fulfil the school's aims. This is an example of where management and leadership within the role overlap because it requires managerial

techniques to collect and direct the resources required to fulfil those aims, but also creative leadership skills to pick up and identify the task needed to achieve the aims of the school.

The second theme drawn from the literature is that, whilst there is far less empirical study pertaining to middle leadership in schools than there is about senior leadership, the research that does exist emphasises the diversity of roles and the importance they hold in the running of the school (Bush, 2003; Bush, 2012; Busher and Harris, 2000). That the senior leadership of the school see diversity on the roles was summed up by the Headmaster who said:

> *I think they are individuals with management / leadership responsibility …they exercise responsibility for a particular area …Head of Geography, Head of Department, Head of year …so I would say my Head of Rowing is a middle leader actually, because he takes responsibility for other adults, and not just for kids.* (Participant 3 – Headmaster)

This statement confirms the diversity of roles within the school that fall within the area of middle leadership. The headmaster sees academic, pastoral and extra-curricular leadership roles all falling within this category, and his guide to defining this is that middle leaders take responsibility for adults as well as children. A key statement in support of this proposition comes from a middle leader who uses the metaphor of a chain, and describes how important they think the strength of the middle leader link is to the whole unit:

> *Looking into what makes a good head of department is very important, because you are talking about a whole subject area within a school or a college or whatever, and you only need one weak link in there, and if that's the Head of department, unfortunately that's the worst link that could be bad.* (Participant 19)

The data from the interview schedule supports the proposition. Middle leaders are those who take responsibility for other adults, they can be found in areas that cut across the school (academic, pastoral and extra-curricular), they are key players in determining the success within their sphere, and they are a link in the chain between the Headteacher and the classroom teacher. During the reading of the transcripts, and the subsequent coding, the researcher found no statements by the participants that would counter the proposition, and so the researcher contends that, in this case, the role of the middle leader is indeed important within the school, and that this is in line with the literature reviewed.

5:8 Proposition II. There are specific capabilities required by middle leaders

The researcher reminds the reader that whilst he uses the word 'capabilities' on the recognition and understanding that it is a contested concept, he also assumes Davidson's *principle of charity* (1984) as propounded in section 3:4 (Philosophical foundations – ontology) whereby author and reader will grant a common ascription of description to the word. In other words, whilst the reader may not agree with the concept of capabilities being components of leaders, they recognise the researcher's descriptive use of the word. The proposition is formulated on the findings of a number of researchers from both within the field of educational leadership and in the wider domain (examples include: Bush, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2003; Northouse, 2016; Terrell and Leask, 1997). Because the proposition is a temporary construct, designed to test a specific concept, it is perhaps no surprise that the researcher would rephrase it in the light of experience. On reflection, he would refer to the differences in the roles between middle leader and classroom teacher, or between the capabilities needed by middle leaders and those needed by classroom teachers, or even combine this and the next proposition in order to illustrate those needed for middle leadership. However, the aim of the proposition was to prove that there are particular capabilities required by those in middle leadership positions, and the statements below support this.

To begin the defence of the proposition, the researcher uses a 'broad brush' statement to show how wide ranging the remit of the middle leader's role can be within the school:

> *I've got to offer leadership, and my academic discipline, so that involves overseeing the management of staff, ensuring that there is consistency between our teaching, trying to raise the standards, the quality of our teaching, keep abreast with subject developments, bring new ideas to the table, but not just change the status quo for the sake of change, all of the admin bits, so budgeting, timetable allocation, mentoring new members of staff, being on hand to offer advice to my colleagues if they need it, organising all the enrichment activities and trips, being in charge of departmental budgets.* (Participant 8)

None of the items mentioned by this participant would normally be expected of a classroom teacher, although a departmental member who is not the head of department may reasonably be asked to assist in some of the tasks described. It is of note that this statement, as do those of other participants, includes references to both person leadership

and resource management, and so confirms the contention that middle leaders need to have capability in both the spheres of leadership and management in order to perform and fulfil the task expected of them in line with the writings of Northouse (2016) and Simonet and Tett (2012). This brings into focus three particular areas that are mentioned by other participants. First, there is the need for an understanding of the institution. This is arguably of more importance to the middle leader than it is to the classroom teacher because it is they who need to direct their department in such a way that it enmeshes with the overarching vision of the school. If the middle leader's vision lacks congruency with the head teacher's vision, then there will be conflict, and for the middle leader to create a direction that agrees with the organisation, then they must first understand it. Second, the respondent talks of the importance of being the dominant figure in the subject. On reflection, the researcher wishes that they had dug a bit deeper on this response to see just what was meant, but nonetheless, it is reasonable to assume that the participant means that, of all the members of the team, the middle leader needs to have the best understanding of the subject area, the syllabus and the pedagogy. In any group, only one should be the dominant figure in their subject, and so the middle leader needs the competencies that set him or her apart from the remainder of the team in this regard. Third, the respondent refers to the need to be able to 'play people'. All teachers can, or at least should be able to, lead and manage children, but this participant is referring to the need to be able to lead and manage other teachers. The responses in this case suggest that this is perhaps the single biggest difference between the two roles, and one that was mentioned by a significant number of those interviewed. It is not only the managing of one's peers that can be challenging, but the fact that for a number of those interviewed, the people that made up their team were in themselves a disparate bunch:

Well the biggest challenge was that I wanted to change the entire pedagogy of teaching in the lower school. I had to do that within an established department, of experienced teachers, one of whom had been the head of department interregnum for a year; and one of whom had previously been the head of department and was now the deputy head; one of whom had applied for the head of department job, an internal candidate, but didn't get it; one of whom was a member of staff who had been here since the early eighties, and hadn't come through a teacher training programme; one of whom was a very disillusioned member of staff in his or her early

fifties that was already having issues before my arrival with motivation, and that in turn was impacting on the boys' relationship with him or her; and a member of the department who really wasn't cut out for whole class teaching, he or she was more suited to small A level classes, but was being asked to teach big Y8 classes with no kind of training. (Participant 14)

This full and rich description of the make-up of one participant's department proved to be far from unusual in the case, and is a scenario that is quite different to anything that needs to be faced by a classroom teacher. The participant (who is head of an academic department) is young, it is his first appointment as a middle leader within a school, and he finds himself faced with a team of people who are not only very different to himself but also to each other in terms of the position within their career and their personalities.

As will be discussed in more depth later, a key role of the middle leader is the bridge/conduit/arbitrator between the senior leadership and the classroom teachers, they frequently need to be the conduit for policies set by the senior leaders, and they can discover that their team members are not always as compliant as they would wish:

(I) *sometimes have the challenges of trying to make people do things they don't want to do which is obviously quite a tricky one.* (Participant 24)

So, it follows from this, that getting to know and understand one's team members well is a prerequisite of being able to lead them. Again, this is clearly evidenced within the data, but most importantly for this section of the thesis, it further underlines the need for capabilities that are different to those that are needed by the classroom teacher:

(About knowing the team members) *It's very, very important. When you look at a member of your team, you have to identify what their strengths and weaknesses are and therefore, recognising what their weaknesses are, you're looking to do all that you can in order to help them improve on those particular weaknesses.* (Participant 13)

One participant spoke of how he would have liked advice and support around this capability, particularly in the early stages of taking the role on:

I really wish I'd had help on was the social skills, the experience of understanding of how people work, and how to get the best out of them, and how to get them to work together. (Participant 7)

It is clear that the middle leader needs to know and support their staff, a task that is not always easy and which some participants found particularly difficult.

One of the issues that can occur in a small organisation with a collegiate culture is that there is a blurring of the lines between professional relationships and personal relationships, particularly when staff have been appointed internally. This means that, for some middle leaders, and perhaps more notably, younger and less experienced staff, they find that they must consciously move themselves away from their peers when working in a professional capacity and, as noted by one participant, this is not always easy:

> *One of my best friends is a form tutor in Y9, and I'm sort of saying to him at times 'Get the paperwork sorted'. That's difficult to balance, that's one of the hardest things to do. I probably underestimated it as well.* (Participant 5)

The findings of this study support the assertion that there are specific capabilities required by the middle leader in the school. The participants describe challenges that are different to, and so would not normally be met by, classroom teachers, largely because the middle leader must interface much more significantly with other adults, be they above the middle leader, below them or to the side of them. Because, as the data substantiates, these challenges are different to those faced by the classroom teacher, it is reasonable to assume that the capabilities required to succeed in the role may be different also. The next section of the study uses the data from the interviews to look in more detail at what those capabilities might be.

5:9 Proposition III. The capabilities required for leadership within a school context are not necessarily the same as those needed by a classroom teacher, there is an identifiable capability gap

Having accepted that the role of middle leadership within the case requires certain capabilities, the researcher uses this next proposition or theoretical construct to attempt to tease out what some of these capabilities might be, and to see where they differ from those required by a classroom teacher. To begin, the researcher uses a quote to illuminate the position of middle leadership within the school from the perspective of one of the middle leaders themselves:

> (The middle leader) *has to take a balanced view of things, and has to balance top down priorities with priorities from the teaching staff, and be stuck in that sort of*

middle ground, it's quite a lonely place to be, quite a different place to be I think from just being a classroom teacher who has to worry about relationships with their class, and doing what their head of department asks of them and occasionally chipping away saying 'Oh, I don't see why we have to do that'. Being the person who has to make you follow management instructions and things is quite a different place to be I think. (Participant 24)

This statement places the middle leader right in the 'middle ground' of the leadership hierarchy within the school. As the participant notes, they must be 'balanced', take note of 'top down' priorities, describing it as 'quite a lonely place'. The participant also distances the position of the middle leader from that of the classroom teacher by alluding to some of the factors that they need to deal with about which the classroom teacher is quite unaware.

Because of this position of isolation within the heart of a hectic and bustling environment, the middle leader needs a degree of confidence, assertiveness and resoluteness:

You're also dealing with the people above you, so being able to put your point forward, what you want for your middle bit, a certain amount of assertiveness. You need to understand people, and their needs, understand how they tick. (Participant 6)

The strength to be confident and assertive needs to be tempered with a considered approach, further emphasising the 'balance' described by participant 24 above. A number of participants spoke more specifically about this aspect of middle leadership, explaining why they felt it an important aspect of their role:

But I do think you can't ignore issues, you can't just lie back and think 'Oh, I don't want to rock the boat'. Because sometimes you do have to rock the boat, and you've got to be prepared to do that, because that's one of the roles of a Head of Department. (Participant 19)

So, the confidence to be contentious and stand up for what they believe to be right when required appears to be needed in the role, even if this means taking on difficult conversations on behalf of departmental staff:

I'll take the angry phone call, I'll meet the parent, I'll take the responsibility for things – I've got no problem doing that, so I like to think that in a way I can act as a shield

for the people in the department, so they've comfortable knowing someone's got their back if things were to go wrong, so that's something I would say I try consciously to do that. So I might say to teacher M when he is unsure about giving a pupil a particular grade 'if you believe in that, you give it, if the parents complain, or if you get a rough ride from the kid, you send them to me and I will sort that out'.
(Participant 12)

This capacity to take on difficult conversations was perceived to be part and parcel of the role in the case, partly because participants felt it right that they should not expect their departmental members to do things that they were not prepared to do themselves, and partly because they felt that taking these courses of action would give them kudos in the eyes of their team members. It also confirms the view that middle leaders must deal with a set of complex interpersonal relationships that include agencies beyond their team members (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2011; Busher and Harris, 2000). It is interesting to note that, whilst the concept of the macro 'heroic leader' has long been out of favour with those who study leadership, on a micro scale this concept of leading from the front and feeling the pain is still very much in evidence.

The findings of this study showed that an essential part of middle leadership is the capability of knowing one's subject area well, whether academic, pastoral or extra-curricular, and that this encompasses a wide range of knowledge from subject matter to specifications to statutory guidance, and that because subject knowledge is dynamic in that it progresses over time, middle leaders need to keep up to speed with the latest developments in their respective fields.

For those who are heads of academic departments, this means ensuring that they are the lead practitioner in their subject, however for those whose middle leadership is on the pastoral or extra-curricular side, it may mean balancing two priorities; that of their leadership area and that of their academic subject area. This can also involve shifting their priorities, as this participant explains:

I've learnt that the challenge is different now, I'm no longer a Geography teacher; I'm a Group Tutor, Head of Lower School who teaches Geography. it's the nature of pastoral jobs is that I can be teaching in ten minutes and an incident happens that needs dealing with and... which is one of the best things about the job, but you never

know what's going to happen, and that's one of the things I love about it, but conversely, I feel at times that it has impacted on the teaching. (Participant 5)

This confirms the writings of Wenger (1998) who observed that teachers are frequently members of more than one community. The participant explains clearly how being both a Geography teacher and a Pastoral leader can require him to change from one role to another at a moment's notice. Clearly, he finds this both exhilarating in the variety it brings, but also challenging because the middle leadership role can have a negative effect on his teaching role. The balance between one's subject knowledge and the leadership skills required for the role can take the newly appointed middle leader by surprise, as expressed by this participant:

> *What I'm learning with starting any job that's fairly new to you, the job description said: 'Head Coach of Rowing' and one would assume that you were going to be coaching rowing with a bit of administration and organisation, but on actually coming into the job, the ratio of coaching to admin and organisation to leadership is way off what I predicted.* (Participant 7)

As the researcher has already noted, the skill of managing other adults is one of the key capabilities required by middle leader, and a number of staff described their professional and often personal struggle with their team members, showing how the aspect of leadership and management that comes with the role of middle leader can be particularly taxing, challenging one's own beliefs and values.

> *…he was awkward, he was difficult to manage, and I'm not sure to be honest that I did manage him.* (Participant 17)

So, learning how to manage other adults appeared high on the list of priorities of those interviewed:

> *And from those roles, I started to develop leadership skills, learning about personalities, character skills, motivation, how to work with people and around people to get a particular job done and the politics involved.* (Participant 7)

This can be quite a different level of skill to that required of the classroom teacher. If it is power that enables the middle leader or the teacher to influence others, then it can be argued that the classroom teacher will rely more on positional power than the middle leader; the asymmetry of the positional power relationship is much greater for the

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classroom teacher. This means that, for the newly appointed middle leader, unless they have led adults in another context, they are having to learn skills that they may not have known that they even needed.

Finally in this section, two of the participants expressed their view that the process of taking on a department was a reflexive one in that not only had their middle leadership role changed the department, but the department had changed them also:

> *I felt that was what this job had created, challenges and situations that have really challenged my core ethics, my philosophies and my capabilities of what I can and can't do, right to the edge.* (Participant 7)

> *I'm sure people say 'Oh, he's changed, the job's changed him, and the truth is it has to change you.* (Participant 5)

The researcher contends that, on the evidence of these findings, there are indeed capabilities required by middle leaders that are different to those of the classroom teacher, and which are identifiable, and this aligns with the findings of Bush (2012). They need to be confident and assertive in dealing with agencies other than the children in their class (senior leaders, team members, parents) and they need to be seen to be so by their departmental members. They need to be flexible, possibly adjusting their priorities between academic teaching and their leadership role, they need to manage adults which, unless they have done so before, they will find is quite a different skill to managing children. It is telling, that two participants spoke of how the role had changed them because it can be argued that this, in itself, is evidence that the role is different to the one they undertook previously.

5:10 Proposition IV. A programme of support for leaders in their formative period of development has the potential to bridge some of the capability gap

As the researcher has propounded, and the data has substantiated, the role of the middle leader requires different capabilities to that of the classroom teacher, and so it is logical that there must be a transitional period when a middle leader first takes the role on. The length and complexity of this transitional period will vary from middle leader to middle leader and depend on factors such as whether or not they are an internal appointment, or appointed from outside; whether they have had experience as, say, a second in department; whether they have had leadership experience in a different sphere; on their

personality traits; on their willingness and ability to adapt to new circumstances. Thus, it can be argued that, as notable improvements in education rarely take place in the absence of professional development (Guskey, 2000), and that all newly appointed middle leaders will go through some form of transitional period, doing so without preparation or training in the area of leadership is indeed irresponsible as espoused by Brundrett and Rhodes (2011).

For a newly appointed middle leader from outside the school, there is not only the challenge of the new position, but there is also the task of learning about a new environment:

> *I'm new to the role of Head of Department, and I'm in a new school as well, and so as much as I would like to be able to take the initiative and do lots of things totally for myself, I think I'm still in that stage where I'm still getting used to a) the school, and b) the position.* (Participant 15)

For any newly appointed middle leader, whether appointed from outside or from within, the support offered by the school appears scant. Whilst it may indeed be the case that middle leaders become good heads of departments, some participants expressed their concern at the lack of support tendered by the school:

> *But you are just thrown in at the deep end, you're given an office and what you do then, like teaching, is sink or swim.* (Participant 5)

As pointed out earlier in this chapter, middle leadership can be a lonely place, and this sense of isolation, particularly during the transitional period was noted by one participant:

> *…you want somebody you can bounce ideas off I think, as a new head of department, I think that's very important. Otherwise, you could end up feeling very isolated when, actually, there's no need to.* (Participant 20)

A point made repeatedly by middle leaders, is that of taking the time on first appointment to settle in and observe the lie of the land. There was a consistency in the responses about being reluctant to charge in and make immediate changes. This is an interesting aspect of the interview results because in effect it gives the newly appointed middle leader some time and space in which to identify strengths and weaknesses within their domain, and to work out strategies for dealing with them. This also means that anyone working alongside them as a coach or mentor has the time and space to advise in a considered and measured

manner. Whilst schools are hectic and fast paced (Davies, 2009) there is an acceptance that, in this context, time taken to observe and reflect is time well spent:

> *I think there are dangers and difficulties in joining and certainly attempting to change things too quickly, or not allow for individual agendas, hidden agendas that individual colleagues in the department may harbour.* (Participant 18)

Contemporary literature on leadership contends strongly that leading involves skills that can be learned (Jackson and Parry, 2011; Northouse, 2016), and none of the middle leaders interviewed suggested that they were in a position of leadership that was fixed and about which they had control or influence:

> *I think you can develop leadership skills.* (Participant 11)

Some participants were happy to suggest ideas for what might be included in a programme of induction for the newly appointed middle leader:

> *I would have some kind of session on providing a vision for a department. How on earth do you construct a development plan, how do you want them to go about leading a department over five years, how are you going to structure that. Obviously, it's going to be broad, but I just think the principles, and how they tie in with the school's principles would be useful. What's the ethos of the school, how might your departmental ethos… something along those lines.* (Participant 16)

Having noted that participants desire support in their role during the transitional period, there is a paradox in that they also contend that the best way of learning the role of middle leader is by getting on and doing it, and the following statements are representative of the views of a number of the participants:

> *I don't think any course can prepare you for the day to day, it's good to have the theory, but I would say it's no substitute for doing the job.* (Participant 5)

> *I wish I had more people experience, erm social skills, I don't know how you would acquire it other than being on the job.* (Participant 7)

The feedback on this proposition strongly supports the contention that newly appointed middle leaders both want and need support and guidance during the transitional period of their initial appointment to a middle leader's post, a stance that has been recognised by many nations across the globe (Brundrett and Crawford, 2008), although how it is realised

varies from country to country (OECD, 2008). The data suggests, however, that the participants in this case are less clear about what this support should look like. Such development opportunities have been provided in the maintained sector in England through the National College for Teaching and Leadership for some years, and the independent sector has also provided a middle leadership development programme, although it can be argued that, because there is so little recorded study into leadership within this sector (Harvey, 2007; Harvey, 2015), their programme must be based on anecdotal rather than empirical evidence. The final proposition uses data from the interviews to explore the benefits that might be accrued from a programme of support.

5:11 Proposition V. A programme of induction for middle leaders has the potential to benefit the individual, the sub unit (department) and the school

The support for this proposition tended to be vague. As the following examples show, there was wide support for the idea of a formal programme of support, however there was much less clarity about how such a programme could benefit the different parties. Depending on the perspective of the individual interviewee, the level of support that is currently offered within the school appears quite mixed, for whilst the school as an organisation may offer little in the way of formal guidance during the transitional period, it appears that newly appointed middle leaders do enjoy a significant level of informal support from their peers, and this was inferred by one participant, suggesting that they were indeed given support in the role:

> *I think if you're left on your own, I can't imagine it would be a terribly easy transition.* (Participant 23)

This suggestion that peer support was available whilst formal support was not, is in conflict with the assertion made by Papay and Kraft (2016), who state that the school plays an important part in the development of newly appointed leaders. This was confirmed by another participant who made the distinction between the lack of formal support offered by the school, and the informal support that was provided by colleagues:

> *Completely informal. There was no sort of structural way of 'This is how you do things.'* (Participant 7)

That the middle leaders are largely left to themselves once appointed is not necessarily an indictment of the school's leadership because, on appointment, assumptions tend to be

made about the appointee's ability to rise to the occasion. This situation of having an ad hoc, informal support structure as part of the school culture that appears in this case may not be unique amongst schools:

> *In terms of my induction as a head of department, it was non-existent, I didn't have any. And I would suggest that's fairly typical actually. I don't know of many schools that I've heard of that actually have specific heads of department induction.* (Participant 16)

However, it is clear from the data that most middle leaders in the study found themselves well supported, albeit in an informal fashion:

> *I'm very grateful to have a lot of support from people pushing me in a particular direction, making sure I'm doing the right things.* (Participant 10)

Some participants spoke of formal courses, both as potential vehicles for leadership development or as routes that they had already taken. The usefulness of these was varied, and appeared to depend on the experience and perspective of the individual participant, aligning with the observations of Danielson (2016) and Mitchell and Sackney (2015) who between them noted that the observation of and interaction with colleagues through a community of practice enables an organic growth of leadership, one that is less easily acquired through more formal means.

As the researcher has noted, the degree to which the evidence from the interviews supports this proposition is somewhat vague in that there is little to link the interviews to the statement that a formal induction process can support the middle leader, the department or the school. What is clear however, is that there is informal support from colleagues and this is welcomed by the respondents. There is also a desire for more formal support from the school. From this it can be deduced that support, both formal and informal is perceived to be beneficial, although it is not possible from the data to distinguish benefits to be gained by the individual, their department or the whole school.

5:12 Summary of the propositions

Through analysis of the coded data, it has been demonstrated that the evidence collected from the interviews largely agrees with the propositions, thus supporting content validity as propounded by Denscombe (2010). In this case, middle leadership is important to the school because the stakeholders (parents, governors, boys) value academic results, and the

key facilitators in the delivery of such results are the heads of the academic departments. Because the marketing of the school also emphasises wider personal attributes that can be developed through both pastoral support, and a wide range of extra-curricular activities such as sport, drama and music, the leaders of these activities also find themselves accountable for translating organisational aspirations into measurable successes. The study confirms the proposition that the role of middle leader requires specific capabilities, that those capabilities are not necessarily the same as those required by the classroom teacher, but that some of the desirable capabilities can be distilled out and identified. Analysis of the findings contained within the Data Presentation suggest that a programme of leadership development has the potential to help the middle leader develop their skills of leadership and management more quickly, although it is less clear on the specifics of exactly how this would be of help to individual middle leaders, their departments, or indeed to the whole school.

On reflection, post analysis, the researcher would subtly re-word the propositions. This is to be expected because they were only designed as temporary constructs (Thomas, 2011), and he would for example focus a little more on the effects of leadership on the learner (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003) and have a greater awareness of the direct link between school leaders and pupils (Crowther, 1997 & 2009). As these data were set against the propositions, the researcher took a piece of advice from Thomas (2011) and constructed a 'storyboard' in his journal which combined the five propositions and the data from the initial interviews. A copy of this is shown below in Fig 5.

The theory as a story board (Thomas 2011)
A temporary conceptual tool. (Thomas 2011)

Prove it.

There is a moral imperative to develop leadership skills in key personnel. 6:1

V Such a programme can benefit the organisation, the department and the individual. 7:1 7:2

Self Reflection 6:9

4:8 Breadth & depth of experience enhance leadership

Coaching & mentoring 6:7

Courses & away days 6:8

There needs to be some nuts and bolts guidance at this stage.

Opportunity to network

Experience can be sought by leader or opportunities constructed by programme.

IV A programme of support in the formative period has the potential to bridge the capability gap.

The desirable qualities are pretty common, ∴ leaders should at least know what they are? 4:3

Current provision (laissez faire 5:1)

Leadership is personal & context bounded. Development programme needs to be bespoke.

Leaders can tap into experience of others (signpost)

Job descriptions don't define the role, so leaders learn 'on the job' ∴ Learning curve. 4:1 4:2

Leaders are all different. 4:4

The complex matrix of leadership in school environments provides opportunities (borrowing knowledge / perspective) and threats (subordinate may be your leader in another context).

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Independent schools are a specific context 1:1

Leadership can be organisation centric or person centric.

Yes, middle leadership is important 1:2

I'm more likely to win people over with a person centric model.

4 August 2013.

Legend:
☐ = 1st propositions
◯ = Supporting evidence
▢ = 2nd propositions
☁ = Ideas.

Leadership is delegated, it is too much for one person 2:1

I Middle leadership is important to the school.

Accountability is enabler & inhibitor

Geographical limitations are of a greater significance to the school than the individual. The school needs good leaders and it needs succession planning. 1:3

Leadership factors can be inhibitors or enablers.

Autonomy is enabler & inhibitor

II There are specific capabilities required by middle leaders.

Time is a significant issue. However, time is a management skill, not a leadership skill and applicable to many leaders & teachers. Time management enables by creating the time needed to lead.

Middle leaders take responsibility for other adults 2:2

The key capability gap is the leading of PEOPLE

Power comes through influence 2:4

III The capabilities are not necessarily the same as those required by classroom teacher 'Capability gap'

It is in this area that most development work will need to be done.

Divided loyalty 3:6

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Fig 5. Propositions and data as storyboard

The legend for this storyboard appears in the top right-hand corner of the page. The rectangular boxes are the propositions that had been used thus far, and which were drawn from the literature review. The ellipses contain the evidence that supported the propositions at the time the storyboard was drawn (by which time 11 interviews had been conducted, transcribed and coded). The rectangles with rounded corners show potential rewording of additions to propositions in the light of the evidence thus far, and the cloud shapes contain ideas that seemed pertinent at the time. It is of note that, as the propositions move from 1-5, the additions to them become more layered and more complex, so whilst the notes by and large concur with proposition 1 (Middle leadership is important to the school), proposition 5 (Such a programme can benefit the organisation, the department and the individual) brings in factors such as moral imperative, breadth and depth of experience, self-reflection, coaching and mentoring, opportunities to network. This is in part, the researcher suspects, because each of the propositions is related to its predecessor, they are not 'freestanding', and because of this, each becomes more dependent on those that go before it, and so proposition 5 relies on the integrity of the previous four. The researcher found this a very useful tool at this stage of the study because

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it enabled him to see on one page how valid the propositions were, how this could be justified, how each proposition could be adapted in the light of the data that was coming in, along with ideas of how to proceed during subsequent interviews (for example in the bottom right-hand corner, the researcher has noted that a key capability gap is in the leading of people, and asks himself whether this is an area where most of the middle leader development work will need to be undertaken). As an example of the way in which the researcher would adapt the propositions in the light of experience, the original proposition 4 states: *'A programme of support for leaders in their formative period of development has the potential to bridge some of the capability gap'*. His subsequent proposition is a little more specific: *'A programme of development for middle leaders during the formative stage of their appointment has the potential to support any identified shortcomings in their capability gap'* (Researcher's Journal, 5th August 2013).

Towards the end of this stage of the research, the researcher became aware that the leaders he had identified and interviewed were all positional leaders, in other words they had all been appointed by the Headmaster at some point and thus each had an official, nominated, title within the school. An area that he has not enquired into is that of emergent leaders within the school, those who have informally organised other staff through, for example, chairing meetings or organising team activities. An example within this particular case would be the Chair of the Learning and Teaching committee who, whilst having been appointed as the Learning and Teaching Coordinator, has taken it upon himself to form this committee, formulate its aims and terms of reference and subsequently promulgate its findings. This is an example of a member of the teaching staff taking it upon themselves to develop a leadership role as part of a solution to an issue that they have identified, thus he has assumed a leadership role that is distinct from that of positional leadership (Spillane et al., 1999) and which resonates with the observations of Elmore (2000) who speaks of leadership within an organisation following the 'contours of expertise'. Schools are populated with teachers who want the best for their children, and it may be that that a culture which not only allows, but positively encourages deft and opportunistic leadership from within is a model for schools to aspire to, because it will increase leadership density, which in turn increases the number of people who have an important stake in the school, and thus augments their motivation (Sergiovanni, 2001).

5:13 Separating the things that middle leaders can change from the things they can't

Approximately 10 months into the (part time) study, the researcher had interviewed 11 participants, and was well into the process of coding the data. Whilst sketching out the themes that began to emerge in his journal (29th July 2013), he spotted a number of distinct patterns within the coding. To begin with, there were those factors that were contextual, in other words, they helped describe the school, the management system, the place of the middle leader within the organisation and how teaching remains a core task for the middle leader. He then realised that there were a significant number of codes that described the factors that impact on the middle leader in their day-to-day work. In what Thornbeg and Charmaz (2011) term an 'Aha! Experience', the researcher noted that these factors could be further categorised into those which make the middle leader's role challenging, and those which make it possible. This was drawn into his journal as a graphic or cartoon, with a man in a basket being supported by balloons (enabling factors) whilst being held down by rocks (inhibiting factors). It appeared to the researcher that, the more rocks there were, or the larger they appeared, the more they would pull the basket down, whilst conversely, the more balloons, and the larger the size of them (i.e. more effective), then the greater the upward force, resulting in the leader being successful. For the researcher, this was a moment of revelation in the research programme because for the first time it brought clarity to the findings, and gave him a clear model on which he could focus subsequent interviews. Fig. 1 shows the graphic as it appears in the researcher's journal.
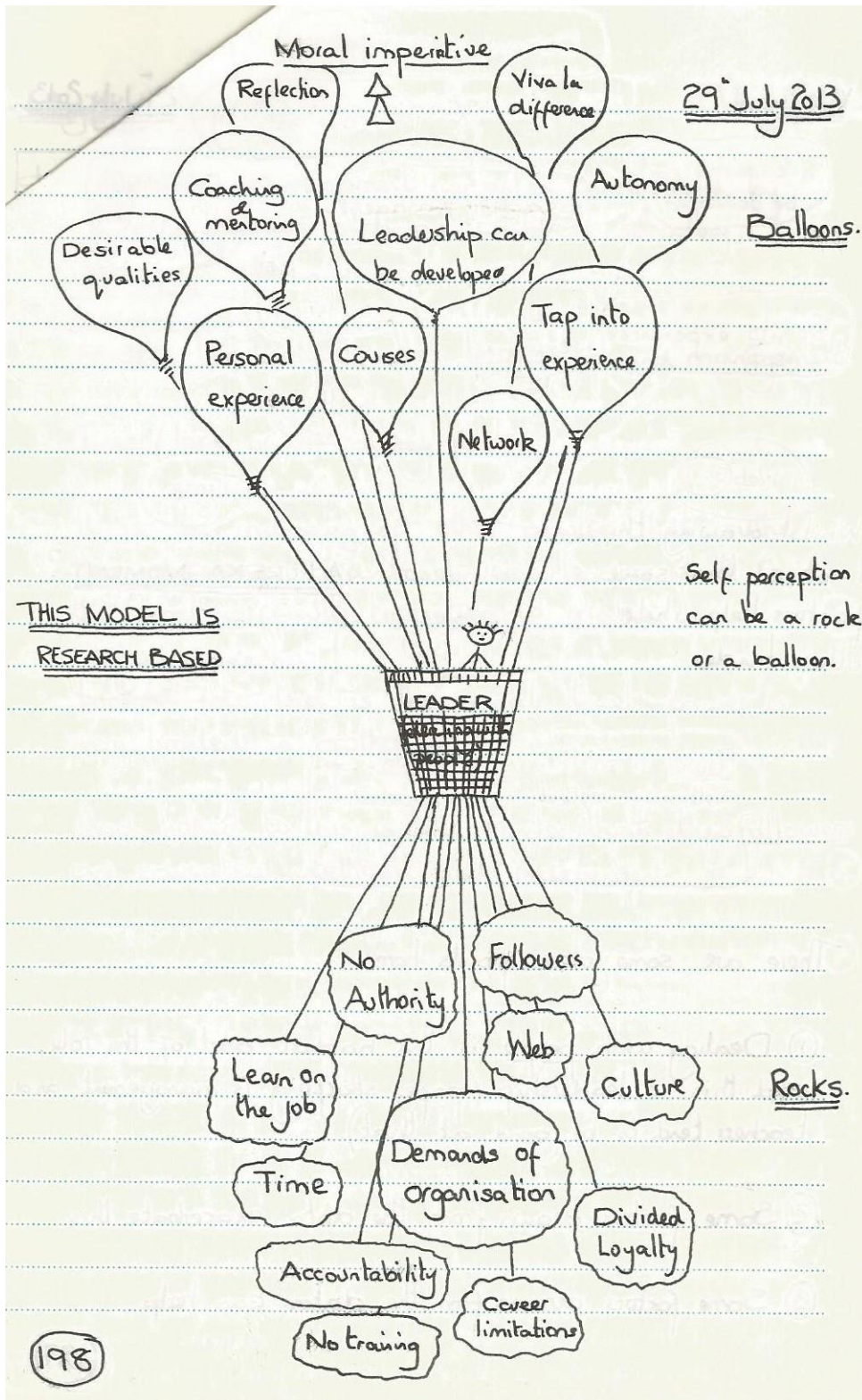
Moral imperative

Reflection

Viva la difference

29ᵗʰ July 2013

Coaching & mentoring

Leadership can be developed

Autonomy

Balloons.

Desirable qualities

Personal experience

Courses

Tap into experience

Network

THIS MODEL IS RESEARCH BASED

Self perception can be a rock or a balloon.

LEADER

No Authority

Followers

Lean on the job

Web

Culture

Rocks.

Time

Demands of organisation

Divided Loyalty

Accountability

Career limitations

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No training

Fig 6. Balloons and rocks graphic.

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As the researcher worked at this model over the following days and months, the factors became steadily more refined, and this was aided by the ongoing dynamic between the coding and the interview schedule (Alvasson and Skoldberg, 2000; Saldaña, 2013) until the final codes appeared as follows:

Challenging factors

- Job descriptions.
- Culture of the school.
- Expectations of the organisation.
- Followers.
- 'Piggy in the middle'.
- Web or 'complex matrix'.
- Time constraints.
- Lack of preparation for the role.

Enabling factors:

- Vision.
- Leading through personal example.
- Self-reflection.
- Knowing oneself and being oneself.
- Knowing your followers.
- Building a team.
- Personal experience.

As the model and its subsequent refinements were interrogated more closely, a further key observation that became apparent to the researcher was that the challenging factors tended to be external to the leader, and outside of their control, whilst the enabling factors tended to be internal to the leader, lying largely within their control. Thus, for example, the expectations of the organisation which is a factor that is likely to put pressure on the leader and which is external to them, is one over which they have little if any control. Compare this with, for example, tapping into the experience of others which appears as an enabling factor, it can help the leader with both immediate skills and longer-term perspectives and is something that the leader can have some direct control over – they can go and ask a colleague for help. This led the researcher to consider whether a leadership development

programme would be better homing in on the enabling factors, as these appear to be factors that are within the control of the leader. This perspective of leadership was something of a eureka moment for the researcher, because there appeared to be a pattern emerging from the research that informed him about which aspects of leadership have a potential for leader development, and those aspects that don't. The following sections of this chapter analyses each of these factors in turn, showing how they are informed by both the interview data and, where appropriate, the relevant literature. The researcher considers the challenging factors first, and follows these with the enabling factors.

5:14 Challenging factor 1: Job descriptions

Gunter (2001) argues that the role of the middle leader needs to be clearly defined, and that it should be understood, monitored and evaluated, however a number of the participants in this study claimed that they had not been given a job description or, if they had, they had not seen it for such a long time that they couldn't recall having seen it:

> *I don't think I've ever had a job description. If I've got one, I don't remember where I've stored it.* (Participant 7)

This is not necessarily the case across all the middle leaders within the school, because the school has published job descriptions for many years, and the fact that participants can't remember where they are, or even having seen them does not mean that they don't exist. Whether the middle leader is in possession of a job description or not, it would appear that the nature of the role of middle leader in the school is such that it defies accurate demarcation.

> *…the whole nature of the job is vaguely amorphous… What it should be or not, I don't know.* (Participant 9)

This indicates that clearly defined job descriptions are not readily achieved because the reality of the roles is such that things happen that are difficult to predict, much of the role is reactive and the culture of the school is one of collegiality – people will step in to fill perceived gaps as they appear.

> *Some of the things that crop up in the job, you just wouldn't ever be able to predict.* (Participant 8)

These responses indicate that unpredictability is the norm for the role of a middle leader in the school, and aligns with the observation of Davies (2009) who notes that the

environment within schools is hectic, fast paced and that teachers who take such roles on should expect the unexpected. The lack of clear guidelines, combined with the unpredictable nature of the role appeared to be unsettling for at least one interviewee who told the researcher that, when he took his post on:

The biggest challenge was actually knowing what the role was. (Participant 6)

It can be argued that in this school, it is quite unrealistic to write an accurate job description for middle leadership roles because the nature of the role in the school is such that it is difficult, if not impossible to predict what the role may entail on a day to day basis. Because the interviewees spoke on the subject of the boys on such a regular basis, the researcher would suggest that a common aim for most if not all middle leaders is 'What do I believe to be in the best interest of the boys?' Middle leaders appear to work back from this to mould their role as they see fit to achieve this aim:

Yeah, I've completely moulded the job into what I think the job is, and what I think needs to be done, in order to execute this, this and this. (Participant 7)

Thus, what the middle leaders actually do on a day to day basis is influenced more from their own judgement that from an external template:

But I think until you're in the role, you don't really know what it might involve. (Participant 23)

It may be that, at the beginning of their incumbency, newly appointed middle leaders should have the shifting and unpredictable nature of their role explained to them so that, whilst they may be taken by surprise by the unexpected, they at least know that it is in the nature of the role.

5:15 Challenging factor 2: Culture of the school

Culture permeates all aspects of any organisation, is often described as 'The way we do things around here' and the incomer will need to develop an understanding of, and empathy for the culture. It acts as the glue that binds people together, and whilst some aspects of it may be taught formally to new employees, it is more generally learned through informal methods such as stories, myths, rituals and behaviours (Alvesson, 2002; Martin, 2006; Schein, 1992). Of course, because the school culture is largely tacit, it can take time to pick up the detail. One interviewee who had significant experience in other schools explained the issues facing new teachers to the school:

What they don't know are the… they don't know the school and its vagaries, its' sort of nuances, and sort of how it does things… I do think you need to know certain things about the school. And some of the times, these are things you aren't going to write down. (Participant 20).

Learning about the school's culture is a challenge for any new member of staff. Much that is absorbed over time and learned through conversations and experience can appear alien to the uninitiated, and of course a newly appointed middle leader taking on a new role in a new school has the extra layer of administration to come to terms with. Whilst understanding the culture of the school is one thing (and experience has shown the researcher that whilst the culture of the school suits most incoming staff, it is not to everyone's liking, and a small proportion of staff will move on because of this), it can be a challenge of some significance to a head of department who wants to influence or change the culture:

…if anything, there's been a mild frustration at just having to do things in a set way rather than do what I think might be for the best. (Participant 25)

That's the persistent response: 'We've never done it that way before. (Participant 9)

One head of an academic department who had experience in other schools felt that the stability of the staff could work against change because those teachers who had been in the school for some time were imbibed in the culture and, knowing no different, were happy to maintain the status quo:

…a lot of people have never seen how things are done elsewhere, and actually have no intention of seeing how things are done elsewhere, and that means that it's very difficult when you do suggest change. (Participant 16)

This response articulates a view, hinted at by other participants, which is that the lack of churn in the staffing of the school means a significant proportion of the staff neither know any different nor want to know any different. This 'drag' on the pace of change through a culture that appears to be deeply embedded, and which is perpetuated by experienced staff who don't know any different, is clearly a factor that a number of the more recently appointed middle leaders find challenging. When freshly appointed to a leadership position, it is quite natural for the appointee to want to make their mark, to change things for what they see to be the better. If this runs into a culture of inertia because more senior

and experienced staff have always done things in a particular way, then it is understandable that the newly appointed middle leader will find this a factor that confronts their ability to lead. Thus, the externally appointed middle leader has the challenge of learning the school's culture, while both external and internal appointees can find the prevailing attitude of 'that's the way we have always done things here' an impediment to their aspirations for progress. However, interviewees did acknowledge that the pervading culture did need to be challenged:

5:16 Challenging factor 3: The expectations of the organisation

If culture is tacit and generally hidden, then the expectations of the organisation are explicit and largely visible. Middle leaders work within an organisation, they have people to whom they are accountable, and people who are accountable to them and, as is acknowledged by Toop (2013) they turn the strategies of the senior leadership into classroom practice. They are a diverse group, working within a wide range of contexts, and while each school is unique in its own way, with leaders addressing the peculiarities of their own organisation (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003; OECD, 2008), the nature of independent education within the UK means that schools within this sector face pressures that, whilst not dissimilar to those faced by maintained sector schools, come through a need to maintain their position within the marketplace rather than through the demands of government. The school within which the study is based is under significant pressure to improve exam results incrementally year on year and maintain its position in regional and national exam league tables. These expectations are most usually articulated by and demanded from the Headmaster of the school who, in turn, has expectations placed on him by, in varying degrees, governors, parents, pupils and government. In this study, it is quite clear that the influence of the Headmaster is a powerful one:

The Headmaster. I don't even need to elaborate on that. (Participant 14)

Beyond the requirement to comply with statutory requirements, the Headmaster of the school is primarily accountable to the governors and the parents, and so not even the overall leader within the school is without constraint and accountability. It is the Headmaster who meets with the heads of academic departments each year in September to discuss the exam results, and to hold them to account, and the researcher has seen for himself that this can be a bruising experience. Through this chain of accountability, the

middle leaders within the school are held to account for the public exam results obtained by the boys being taught by members of their department:

> *I feel accountable all the time, in terms of results, because the Head sells the school in terms of public exam results.* (Participant 7)

When asked whether the aims of the school and the aims of his department aligned, one participant gave the following answer:

> *I think they do, because the aims of the school I think, as an independent, high achieving school should be aiming to produce enthusiastic, autonomous boys that take responsibility for their own learning and do it to a high standard, and I think that by wanting to promote the idea of doing the subject for enjoyment and not necessarily purely for the grade, I think they're not identical but I do certainly think they work in tandem with one another.* (Participant 15)

It is clear that the school, through the Headmaster, expects middle leaders to achieve success through the exam results of the boys within their department, and it is also clear who the Headmaster holds accountable for the delivery of these results:

> *…ultimately, you are the one who carries the can.* (Participant 14)

This situation was expressed in various ways by a number of the participants, and can be seen as a challenging position for the middle leader to find themselves in. It is the middle leaders who 'carry the can', yet they are taking the responsibility for the actions of others; Firstly, their team members who deliver lessons within their department, and secondly the pupils. As such, they are held to account for results achieved by other players, and thus are accountable by proxy. If the middle leader is to be judged on the efforts of others, are those players always as compliant as the middle leader would wish? If the researcher's study is anything to go by, the answer is: not necessarily, and this was particularly well articulated by one of the participants:

> *Because if I go back to my staff and say This is what's going to happen' I get a tirade of discussion, debate, going on about 'Why are we doing it, I thought we'd do it this way' and I say, 'Well the Head has made the decision, that's the way we have to do it' and sometimes the staff get very dissatisfied with the way things are being handled.* (Participant 13)

At face value, this may appear quite straightforward, however the accountability issue proved to be a very interesting one for the researcher, and so he asked a number of the participants the question 'To whom do you feel accountable?' The answers given were quite varied amongst the differing participants, ranging from the pupils and their parents to colleagues to the Headmaster and the Governors, through the participant's own conscience, and ultimately, in one case, to God.

As has been discussed previously, the researcher was surprised (although in retrospect he probably shouldn't have been) by the strength of feeling expressed by a number of the participants of their loyalty to the pupils. There was a clear indication across a swathe of the middle leadership that there is a strong sense of vocation:

> *I'm accountable to the students. I think first and foremost, I'm accountable to them. I don't deliver lessons for the Headmaster or the Deputy Head because they're not in the lesson.* (Participant 12)

This perhaps illuminates a fracture line between two distinctly different aims within the school: the aim for the boys to achieve high grades in their public exams (for which the Headmaster holds his middle leaders accountable) and the aim of educating the boys (for which the middle leaders hold themselves accountable). The coding that has been drawn from the transcripts suggests that middle leaders acknowledge and accept the dynamic between these two accountabilities, and the degree to which an individual middle leader leans towards one or the other can be multifaceted and complex involving personal histories and ideologies, combined with whatever happens to be the most pressing matter at a given moment in time.

The context of the school can present challenges to the middle leader, not only through corporate aspirations that need to be delivered by other parties, but also through the support structure available. One participant spoke of his experience of, as he saw it, poor quality ICT within the school, expressing the view that this hampered his ability to deliver the expectations put on him by the organisation. Another participant commented on the lack of time available for departmental meetings due to the constraints of the timetable, explaining how he felt that this thwarted his desire to get his team together on a regular basis in order to discuss issues communally. A further participant spoke of his frustration with the channels of communication within the school which he felt hampered his ability to work efficiently:

What I feel is making the situation slightly hazy at the moment is a lack of structure, a lack of clear lines of responsibility, a lack of clear communication frameworks which I feel makes my job harder. (Participant 9)

It is clear that there are a range of factors within the organisation that constrain the middle leader, and over which the middle leader has little if any control. The data gleaned from the interview schedule suggests that, whilst the expectation of the Headmaster for high academic results is quite common across the school, other factors are more nebulous depending on the individual being interviewed and the challenges that they face at that moment in time.

5:17 Challenging factor 4: Followers

An interesting aspect of this study has been that of the middle leaders' perception of their team members. When participants were asked the question: *What is your biggest issue as a middle leader?* the almost unanimous response was in the area of team members or followers. The challenges that were presented by members of the middle leader's department clearly came as something of an unexpected surprise to a number of the participants, and were expressed strongly both by those who had been recently appointed and by those with significant experience. Curiously perhaps, beyond a reference to the micro-politics amongst staff within schools by Busher and Harris (2000), there is little about this in the literature on educational leadership, although it is acknowledged in standard texts on culture where, for example, Schein (1992) observes that it is not uncommon to see employees not communicating with one another to the point at which the level of conflict between groups within an organisation can be 'astonishingly high' (p. 4). As the researcher has explained previously, a key factor that distinguishes middle leadership from classroom teaching is that of leading adults rather than children, and some of the participants in the study were clearly unprepared for this step change:

The biggest challenges are dealing with the adults. Not the kids, it's dealing with the adults, whose attitude staggers me quite frankly. (Participant 10)

The specific issues that were identified and articulated by the participants varied. One participant identified the relative strengths and weaknesses of team members being a potential source of friction, while another picked out personality issues. Differing ages, experiences and outlooks within the same department were further identified by two

participants. As one participant pointed out, these individual foibles are not in the wider interest:

> *Well the problem unfortunately is that it's not the only thing we do. We don't work in isolation; we have to work as part of a team.* (Participant 20)

Middle leaders then, are dealing with other adults at close range on a day to day basis in a pressurised environment. Because of the low level of turnover within the school, teachers may be in post for many years, and so a newly appointed middle leader is unlikely to have the luxury of appointing their own team. As the researcher unpicked the findings in this particular coding, he noticed that there appeared to be two different reasons for those middle leaders who were interviewed finding their followers a challenge. The first is the differing personalities, experiences or outlooks of the followers:

> *…because we are all different personalities, we all look at things differently.* (Participant 4)

So, this suggests that it is *who* a person is that has an effect on their relationship with the middle leader. A second strand within the coding suggests that it is *where* a person is within the organisation that can affect the relationship:

> *I think the biggest challenge for me is that I've got a lovely department, but I've got people who are at very different stages of their career. Their priorities, quite understandably, are completely different at the minute because they're trying to get on with things, and I've also got someone else who is a former head of department, but in a management role with other priorities in other parts of the school.* (Participant 24)

> *In one sense, it's been quite hard because I've got, and I've always had, someone working past retirement, and a very junior member, either an NQT or a PGCE, so opposite ends of the spectrum to deal with.* (Participant 7)

That these issues are a challenge to the participants came over particularly strongly during the interviews. For the newly appointed middle leader, this can come as something of a surprise because, without either prior experience, or somebody to warn them of what may happen, there is nothing to prepare them for the micro-politics that will inevitably be taking place.

I underestimated the staff factor. The management of the staff is the biggest part of the job. It's not dealing with the boys, it's dealing with the staff, and the staff making your job far more complicated, that's what I've learnt on the job, I wish I'd known a bit more about that, it's the staff that are the problem not the kids… the problems are often staffing issues or conflict between staff; that's what I've learnt on the job. (Participant 5)

The quantity of data in this area is significant, and it clearly presents quite a challenge to middle leaders, with many participants speaking about it. Interviewees could be quite emotive in the language they used:

And there were massive issues. (Participant 14)

…and this has provided real flashpoints and difficulties within the department. (Participant 18)

These examples of friction can occur between the departmental members and the middle leader, they can occur between the different members of the department and they can occur between a member of department and somebody outside the department (the researcher has examples of each). Some middle leaders will work to avoid conflict if possible:

I don't like to upset people. And sometimes that can lead to me making decisions, and on reflection, looking back, I should have been a bit more forthright there perhaps. And so, I've got better at that, but I still occasionally walk away from a meeting and think 'That didn't turn out like I wanted it to turn out' I could see an argument and I tried to avoid it. (Participant 12)

It is of note that the challenge that team members can present to the middle leader is not more widely discussed in the literature. This may be because, as the majority of the research in educational leadership is about senior leaders who are, by virtue of their position, that much further removed from close interpersonal relationships than those who are at the heart of the head of department or classroom teacher relationship. Such leaders are less involved in the micro politics of the school. It may also be because much published work is that of researchers who are external to the school, and so the researcher, from a position of practitioner or insider research, is tapping into a vein that might not be revealed to an outsider. As the researcher discussed earlier in this chapter, a key factor that

distinguishes middle leadership from classroom teaching is that of leading adults rather than children, and some of the participants in the study were clearly unprepared for this step change. The issues identified and articulated by the participants varied. One participant identified the relative strengths and weaknesses of team members being a potential source of friction, while another picked out personality issues. Differing ages, experiences and outlooks within the same department were further identified by two participants. Middle leaders then, are dealing with other adults at close range on a day to day basis in a pressurised environment. Busher and Harris (2000) make the point that the teaching staff within as school are individual people, each with an agenda of their own, and that a role of the middle leader is to bridge and broker with colleagues and senior staff in order to create social cohesion. Because of the low level of turnover within the school, teachers may be in post for many years, possibly decades, and so a newly appointed middle leader is unlikely to have the luxury of appointing their own team. This is a factor that resonates with the view taken by Bush (2003) who uses the term 'inherit' when describing the middle leader who takes on a team who may not behave as one would wish a team to behave, or in fact engage in any teamwork. This challenging aspect of middle leadership is also recognised by Thorpe and Bennett-Powell (2014) who observe that the management of a disparate team, particularly when the middle leader is accountable to others, is something that can be particularly taxing.

As the researcher looked more deeply into the findings contained within this particular coding, he noticed that there appeared to be two different reasons for the middle leaders interviewed finding their followers a challenge. The first is the differing personalities, experiences or outlooks of the followers. So, this suggests that it is *who* a person is that has an effect on their relationship with the middle leader, and may link in with the established work in the field of leadership dispositions which suggests that we each have some fixed character traits that are a mix of our genes and deeply embedded experiences (Church, 2014; Doe, 2003; Leithwood and Riehl, 2003). A second strand within the coding suggests that it is *where* a person is within the organisation that can affect the relationship. For example, one head of an academic department pointed out the challenge of having both an NQT and a recently retired part-timer in their department, whilst another head of department talked of having the head teacher as a classroom teacher within their team. That these issues are a challenge to the participants came over very strongly during the

interviews, supporting the assertion by Schein (1992) that clash and conflict between colleagues can be part and parcel of teachers' daily working lives. For the newly appointed middle leader, this can come as something of a surprise because, without either prior experience, or somebody to warn them of what may happen, there is nothing to prepare them for the micro-politics that will inevitably be taking place. In this study, the data in this area is significant, and it clearly presents quite a challenge to middle leaders, with 16 of the 25 participants speaking about it. These examples of friction can occur between the departmental members and the middle leader, they can occur between the different members of the department and they can occur between a member of department and somebody outside the department (the coding reveals examples of each). Some middle leaders will plan to avoid conflict if possible. Such issues can be a real challenge for the middle leader, and the emotionally charged language used during interviews give some measure of how significant they are to the individual middle leaders.

5:18 Challenging factor 5: 'Piggy in the middle'

Through the coding of the interview transcriptions, the researcher has identified both the expectations of the organisation and the profiles of the team members as being challenges to the middle leader, and it is these sometimes conflicting posits that place them in a position described eloquently by one participant

> *You are being managed by, as a middle leader, by people above you who understand the general role of the school, but don't understand your subject and how it works; because they can't, otherwise they'd teach your subject. You are managing people who are passionate about their individual subject, but don't see the bigger picture, because they don't have time to see the bigger picture. So, you've got people who don't understand the particular that you're dealing with, and then you've got people below you who don't understand the general, and you're the person who's got to have an eye on both things, and you've got to look in two different directions all the time, and that's where I think all of the problems boil down to. It's that kind of essential position that you're stuck in.* (Participant 24)

Subject leaders in schools have a complex set of interpersonal relationships to deal with in that they are accountable to their senior leaders, but also to other stakeholders such as their team members, pupils and parents (Bennet et al., 2007; Brundrett and Rhodes, 2011; Day, 2007). This tension, or dynamic between the expectations of the organisation, and the

middle leader's ability to deliver is the cause of some angst amongst a number of the participants.

> *And that's one of the worst aspects of being a head of department, being 'piggy in the middle'. I think there's a general piggy in the middle feeling I've had from the start, to do with the rival claims of belonging to the department as head of department and member of the team, and also liaising and dealing and representing the department to the senior management, the headmaster in particular.* (Participant 18)

The term 'piggy in the middle' appears to be very apt, and aligns with the term 'meat in the sandwich' coined by Marshall (2012) when undertaking research into middle leaders in universities in New Zealand. The experiences of the middle leaders in the study show that there is clearly a tension between being the conduit from the senior leadership to the departmental team, yet also representing the views of the team to the senior leadership; this is a tension that a number of interviewees wrestle with, however they are not unique in their situation because this tension between loyalty to the senior leadership and collegiality with team members was identified and recorded elsewhere (Bennet et al., 2003; Branson et al., 2016; Scott et al., 2008). Most, if not all leaders face this tension to some degree, because even the CEO of a major international company will have the expectations of shareholders one side, and the capacity of their workers to deliver on the other, and certainly the Headmaster of the school works in the area of tension that exists between the expectations of the parents and the Board of Governors and the capacity of the staff and the boys.

Whilst this dynamic may not be unusual, it is arguably nuanced by the flatness of the organisation, in other words this 'squeeze' is occurring on a day to day basis in a relatively small organisation between people who all know each other, and so the feeling of 'piggy in the middle' is very close and immediate. This tension is subject to variables from both sides. The pressure brought to bear by the Headmaster may vary according to the interpersonal relationship between the Head and the middle leader. Also, each middle leader has a unique team which, as has been shown through the data, will consist of individuals, each of whom will, due to their personality, experience, age, position within the school, bring their own strengths and foibles. Thus, the researcher can say with a degree of confidence, that the only consistency is that the middle leader will feel pressured from both above and

below; the variables being in each of the parties involved: the organisation, the followers and the middle leader themselves. Again, this is a factor that is identifiable, but about which the middle leader is powerless to change, thus from the perspective of leadership development, there is not a great deal that can be done other than to indicate to the newly appointed middle leader that they are not alone in feeling like 'piggy in the middle'; it simply comes with the territory.

5:19 Challenging factor 6: The web (or complex matrix of leadership)

The school is not particularly big and, with approximately 60 staff is of a size where everyone knows each other. Whilst there are a wide range of responsibilities over and beyond classroom teaching in the school, the hierarchal structure is reasonably 'flat' inasmuch as classroom teachers can readily speak directly to the Headmaster or his Deputies. It is also a feature of the school that there are many cases in which a person is a leader in one context, but a follower in another:

> *And then there's the fact that the people in my department have other whole school responsibilities, and you could make a legitimate argument that teaching French or Spanish or whatever isn't their number one priority.* (Participant 14)

This was described by one participant as:

> *You are actually part of a web.* (Participant 20)

This fits in with the 'communities of practice' defined by Wenger (1998) when he identified there being a large number of small, interlinked and overlapping communities within a school, each centred around an academic subject, year group, sport etc., with most staff being members of multiple communities. Most staff will be members of a number of different communities, with their priorities being in different places at different times. This can be a challenge for the middle leader for two reasons. First, the members of their department will be members of different communities, and the study revealed examples where a member of an academic department was also a middle leader (Head of Year) and where members of academic departments were senior leaders (Deputy Head and Headmaster). Second, the middle leader themselves may be members of more than one community, so in the case, for example, the Head of Middle School (Ys 10 & 11) is also a member of the Modern Foreign Languages department meaning that when preparation for public exams was taking place there are likely to be conflicting demands on his time.

Awkwardness or friction is not automatic within this scenario, and a number of the interviewees described how amicably they got on with both managers and subordinates when they were the same person in different contexts. It would appear that, when teachers and middle leaders make a conscious effort to understand the changing dynamic as their roles interchange, they are quite adept at adapting their behaviour accordingly, with one head of an academic department explaining how he consciously changed his behaviour when invited to be a member of another department's team:

I hate the phrase line manager because it makes it look like management just goes down one route, and then it just ends. There. Whereas actually, in a good school, in a good environment, in a well-managed school you should be able to go in all sorts of different directions. (Participant 24)

This matrix or web is quite different to the archetypal 'pyramid' of leadership that one might see, for example, in the military and it brings with it specific issues. Most teaching staff will be members of more than one community within the school, and so their priorities will be in different places at different times. Middle leaders can find this a source of frustration as described to by participant 14 above, however awkwardness is not inevitable within this scenario, and indeed a number of the interviewees noted how amicably they got on with both their leaders and subordinates when they were the same person in different contexts:

> *There is no, what I would call a power gradient, I never feel that I am being spoken to as a subordinate.* (Participant 12)

> *…but yet I think it is important when I'm part of his team to be quite subservient almost, and support him.* (Participant 14)

It would appear that, when teachers and middle leaders make a conscious effort to understand the changing dynamic as their roles interchange, they are quite able to adapt their behaviour accordingly:

> *Teacher J takes me on the History trips, and it's his trip. He's the head of History, he runs the trip, he organises the trip, I go because I speak a bit of German, and I enjoy the trip because it's not my head that's on the block, I'm not the party leader, but at the same time I know that he appreciates that he doesn't have to micromanage me*

because I'm so experienced when it comes to running trips myself. So, we make a good team, and I know that I bring a lot to the table. (Participant 14)

This may be an important consideration when looking at middle leadership development in schools because it could be that it is quite usual for a middle leader to find that one of their team members is their leader in a different context. However, it may also be that such a scenario is more common in independent schools where extra-curricular activities are prevalent, and of course it may be specific to the researcher's case. Whilst the researcher is not aware of the situation in middle leadership scenarios outside education, he would suggest that this is one of the nuances that distinguishes leadership within schools, and one that has the potential to be a challenging factor for middle leaders as they try to lead and manage individuals for whom the leader's area of responsibility is not always the priority of their individual followers. This could be an area for further research because, whilst the researcher has not studied the case of middle leadership scenarios outside education, anecdotal feedback from those who are leaders in different fields suggest that the porous boundaries described by Davies (2009) are less prevalent in other organisations where demarcation of roles is more clearly bounded. Nonetheless, the researcher observes that, in this case, the 'complex matrix' described by Busher and Harris (2000) is indeed a factor, and one which has the potential to challenge the newly appointed middle leader.

5:20 Challenging factor 7: Time

As has been discussed in the sections above, a key component of the middle leader role is that of interpersonal relations, for not only spend much of their day in a classroom teaching, but they also have to interface with both the people above them in the school hierarchy, and also with their team members, and this places an additional burden on the finite amount of time available during the working week. As an indication of the significance of this factor, 20 of the 25 participants in this case spoke about time pressures at some point during their interview, and different factors can be picked up in the coding. A number of participants talked about the fact that they had a full classroom teaching load, and that leading their department was, timewise, over and above this commitment:

…we're all very busy. People teach 34, 36 periods. It's difficult. (Participant 4)

As previously discussed in the section on job descriptions, some spoke of the unpredictability of the role, with the requirement to be reactive on a regular basis:

I felt that I was constantly fire-fighting all the time. (Participant 8)

Your day can be hijacked very quickly by anything that comes along. (Participant 24)

And just when you think that all is quiet on the Western Front, something will happen in your form room when you've allocated a time to mark some work, and you can't sit and mark that work because you've got to go and deal with somebody or something. (Participant 23)

It is in the nature of a fee-paying school such as this that there is an expectation for staff to be involved in extra-curricular activities which take up further time outside the confines of their department. The lack of dedicated time for interfacing with the members of their department was confirmed by a number of the participants:

…it was impossible. We weren't timetabled meetings during the day, there wasn't a culture of meetings here. So, my frustration remains that we don't meet often enough. (Participant 14)

This situation is not unique to the independent sector. Because of the nature of schools, much of this interfacing is 'snatched' during time pressured periods such as break or lunchtimes, and often when there are pupils around (Brundrett and Terrell, 2004). One participant explained how, with a little ingenuity, they had manged to get around this problem:

The first thing that I did when I had the timetables was to put them all next to each other, and found a time when the three of us were all free at the same time. (Participant 15)

This participant went on to describe how they organised this in such a way that one of the staff who was part time was timetabled to teach on the lesson either side of the meeting, and so unable to go anywhere else because *'…he has to be teaching within half an hour'*.

When asked how they managed their time, participants gave a variety of answers. Some said that they made lists, some explained that they worked long hours, however one interviewee spoke of what he had learnt through experience:

…when I was 25 years old, I would work silly hours just as a teacher. I don't work those hours anymore, because I realised that you're not very productive, and that

you've got to prioritise. You've got to learn to say 'No' at some point and prioritise. (Participant 24)

Time is very much an issue for the middle leaders in this study. They feel that they don't have enough of it because they have pretty full teaching loads which are augmented by extra-curricular contributions that are an expectation of the organisation. There is no time set aside for regularly and formally meeting their team (although there are two or three times per year allocated for this by the senior leadership team). A significant part of their work is unpredictable and reactive, and without some time management techniques, the demands could overwhelm. All those interviewed had developed strategies to help overcome this issue, and it would appear that a perspective which comes with age and experience helps in this regard.

5:21 Challenging factor 8: Lack of preparation for the role

Daily life for leaders is one of chaos and confusion rather than predictability and reason (Ackoff, 1979), and the final challenging theme that appeared to the researcher when coding, was that the participants confirmed this observation, stressing the lack of training they had been given in preparation for such a turbulent and unpredictable role. There were some 28 references to this made by the participants during the interview schedule, a number of whom expressed quite similar views:

Sink or swim. …you are just thrown in at the deep end, you're given an office and what you do then, it's like teaching, you just sink or swim. (Participant 5)

I literally did feel that I was dropped in at the deep end, and dropped down. (Participant 8)

Over half those interviewed spoke of what they saw as a lack of preparation, the common view being that the induction that they had received on their appointment to a middle leadership role was at best inadequate, and at worst non-existent. This contradicts the views of Brundrett and Rhodes (2011); Bush (2009 & 2012); OECD (2008), each of whom extolls the importance of structured leadership development. One of the participants described their experience thus:

One of the steepest learning curves I have gone through. (Participant 8)

It is clear from the data collected by the researcher that a significant proportion of the middle leaders interviewed felt unprepared for the new role they found themselves in. The

prevailing view appears to be that assumptions were made about their ability and experience, and that they would pick up the skills they needed as they went along. Whilst it was confirmed that there was no formal induction or training for the role, the interviewees did speak about the level of informal support that was given to them as time went on:

> *Completely informal. There was no sort of structural way of 'This is how you do things.'* (Participant 8)

Combined with a lack of specific job descriptions, the responses from the interviewees point to the assertion that, on appointment, middle leaders within the school are left to get on with their new role. Whether this is indicative of this school, the independent sector or secondary education in general is impossible to say without further research. Of the responses given by the respondents, none spoke of having what they would consider to be adequate preparation for a middle leadership role, even though a number of the interviewees had experience in a range of schools, a factor that is at odds with Gunter (2001) who argues that the role of leader within a school needs to be understood, monitored and evaluated. This would imply that the situation is more common than in the researcher's case alone, and points to an area that has potential for further research. Interviewees talked about some of the challenges that they faced during the transitional period, and expressed frustration with number of different things they needed to manage and attempt to prioritise when first appointed:

> *I really struggled with the amount of plates that had to be juggled for the actual whole system to run smoothly. …that was really hard, trying to juggle so many different things, where to prioritise.* (Participant 8)

The perceived loneliness of their leadership position was commented upon by four of the participants, one of whom simply said:

> *It's quite a lonely place to be.* (Participant 24)

Whilst it was easy to bemoan the lack of preparation for the role, the coding turned up little in the way of suggestions as to how it may be tackled, indeed two interviewees hinted at what they considered to be an inevitability to the situation:

I think the only way that person can learn those things is by experience, and that's to get out there, and do it, and speak to those people who have had the experience. (Participant 11)

I've spent a lot of time looking at leadership models …but I don't think any course can prepare you for the day to day …it's no substitute for doing the job. (Participant 5)

In brief, participants found the initial stages of the transition period quite difficult, particularly as there was no formal support or guidance on offer. There is a feeling that, having been appointed, an assumption is made that the participants will get on with the job and learn the skills needed through a process of osmosis. Whilst the study is bounded within the one school, more than one participant suggested that the lack of support was not uncommon across schools, and it is of note that not a single one of the 25 participants described any formal support mechanism at all. Whilst none of the participants had any first-hand experience of formal leadership development, there appeared to be the view in some quarters that such an approach would not be as beneficial as getting on and doing the job.

The researcher has, through the coding of a series of semi structured interviews, identified these factors that are a challenge to the middle leader. The evidence is substantial, with the 6 themes being supported by 175 items of data extracted from the transcriptions. The researcher observes that these themes of challenging factors mostly lie outside the control of the middle leader. Whether it is the job description that they are given, the culture and context of the school, the strengths and foibles of their team members, feeling as though they are the piggy in the middle, lack of time or feeling unprepared for the role, each of these factors is external to them. Whilst each and all of these factors may be frustrating and challenging to middle leaders at some point, the middle leader is unlikely to be able to influence them directly. The next section of this thesis draws on the data to present those factors that the middle leader has at their disposal which enable them to perform their role.

5:22 Enabling factor 1: Vision

It is clear from the literature reviewed, both within the field of educational leadership and from the wider arena, that having a vision is desirable, a team needs to know where it is

heading, and it is for the leader to define, articulate and communicate the direction they are heading in, thus helping to bring order to the chaos they would otherwise find themselves in (Ackoff, 1979; Day, 2003; Day et al., 2011). Whilst vision formation and articulation may be seen as a central component of leadership performance (Shipman et al., 2010), other researchers observe that such a task, whilst desirable, is not easily accomplished (Kantabutra, 2010; Martin et al., 2014). Some of the participants would appear to agree with this latter view:

> *Have I got a clear picture of my aims? I think that, erm, not a clear picture, no, I haven't got it formalised in my mind exactly where I would like to take the department.* (Participant 13)

> *Sometimes it was very easy to get stuck in the minutiae of the job and forget about the global, sort of direction, we were going in.* (Participant 8)

These are examples of where participants struggled to articulate their vision, and whilst Participant 8 suggested that he had an aim in his mind, the phrase *sort of direction* suggests that he is unsure himself. This is an important observation for the research because, whilst the literature overwhelmingly emphasises the importance of this component of leadership, it would appear that in this case, the middle leaders interviewed struggle to communicate their vision to the researcher, and if this is so, then it is reasonable to assume that they don't fully understand it themselves.

One participant expressed the view that, whilst they understood the concept and the ideal of having a vision, the day to day fire-fighting of the role interfered with them from stepping back and looking at the wider context, and this ties in with the work of Martin et al. who emphasise that vision formation needs time for both reflection and creative thinking, and that this time must be separate from the regular management tasks (Martin et al., 2014. page 103). This would suggest that whilst the immediate, day to day reactive part of the middle leader's role is easy to deal with because it is always present, the middle leader needs to take a conscious decision to take a step back from time to time, and it may be that they need a third party such as a mentor or a coach to prompt them to do this. Another participant spoke of how they believe that, whilst their team members need to be part of the vision creating process, it is for the leader to have at least an outline plan to begin with:

I think that leadership, leaders, true leaders, they have to bring something to the table, you have to kick things off. You cannot just be right we're sat there with a blank piece of paper, it is the duty of the leader to at least kick off the meeting with some skeletal plan with where you want to go, at which point people come to the table, the plan might change here and there, they might shave bits off, they might add little bits. (Participant 14)

Some participants do have a clear vision of what they want to achieve in their role, and strive to ensure that their followers are included in it. Two participants made it clear that they ensure that their departmental team have an understanding of the vision, however a third participant took this one stage further. He explained that, whilst he holds the complete vision in his own mind, he does not voice it all to his team members:

…but I'm not trying to overwhelm. Everything that's in my head should not be voiced at all times. (Participant 12)

This participant is of the view that his followers only need to know what they need to know at any given time, and they do not necessarily need to have the whole picture, his view is that they should not be overwhelmed. He then takes this a stage further still, stating that his long-term goal may appear to be different to the individual tasks that he is setting:

…and my long-term goal may be different to these individual tasks or suggestions that I might be making. (Participant 12)

Communication is evidenced as a key component of the visioning process, because no matter how clearly the middle leader understands their vision, it is arguably wasted if the followers don't know it, understand it or, worse still, think it is somewhere else:

If I've not reached critical mass, then no matter how good I think the idea is, am I going to be able to push this through without the support of the others? It will take away. And then I will blame the others for not buying into the vision and that's why the vision has failed, and they will blame me for a crap vision. (Participant 14)

There are times when people haven't bought into the vision, but I mean, just using that language, I'm protecting myself because most probably it wasn't the vision they didn't buy into, it was me. They didn't buy into me. Teacher C; she didn't buy into me. And that's hard to take. (Participant 14)

One participant expressed their frustration at this. He states that he believes that he and his team have discussed and agreed the vision, however it subsequently transpires that they have in fact not understood the supposedly agreed vision, through misunderstanding or misconception. This is an important factor because, in the researcher's experience as both a leader and a teacher, it is not uncommon for one thing to be said by the sender, but another to be heard by the receiver, and so accuracy of communication, and confirmation of understanding are essential. It can be argued that it is incumbent upon the middle leader to ensure that their followers fully understand the vision, or the part of it that they need to know, and that this is checked and reinforced on a regular basis.

Whilst the creation of a vision that enmeshes with that of the organisation is of central importance to the middle leader, the data make it clear that this is a complex and multi-faceted task that is not easily enacted by the inexperienced leader. As the researcher discusses in the following chapter, this is an area were mentoring by a more senior and experienced leader has the potential to be of significant benefit to the middle leader in the early and formative period of their role.

5.23 Enabling factor 2: Leading through example

There is no doubt that, in the eyes of those interviewed, being the best in one's subject area is a key capability in being able to lead:

> *But the simple fact is you come into your department and you say that you do this, that, and the other; you're the team leader …there's a kind of sense that, actually, you must be the expert on this.* (Participant 25)

Being the first amongst equals is a theme that plays out with consistency in this coding theme, and is recorded as being of importance to a number of the interviewees:

> *You should lead by example, so in that sense, yes, I like to think I am; without being too narcissistic I like to think that I am the best, or one of the best classroom practitioners in the department, and I think I should be, not because I'm naturally more… but work very hard to try and make sure that I lead from the front so that if a member of my department wanted to come into my classroom, that I should be able to unflinchingly stand there and say 'I will deliver a good lesson that you might be able to glean something from.* (Participant 12)

I think it's important that I'm the best, and the best practitioner. I've got the best room, I've got the cleanest room, I'm the best when it comes to using ICT, that I really set the standards for the rest of the department. (Participant 14)

However, it is not just being the best in your subject area that is deemed to be significant, it is leading by example through working hard that is also considered to be a key factor in middle leadership, and a number of participants spoke of their need to be seen to be working as hard, if not harder than their colleagues:

But you've got to earn respect, by working harder than the rest of them. (Participant 6)

Whilst there are a number of references to leading by example in the research literature pertaining to educational contexts, there are perhaps fewer than one might expect. Terrell and Leask (1997) note that a desirable quality of teacher leaders is that they can do the job, while Leithwood et al. (1999) record that a sound knowledge of subject matter is one of the hallmarks of a good leader. That the significance of being a leading practitioner is notable by its paucity in the literature may again be due to the fact that most leadership research within schools has been undertaken into senior leadership, and this factor may be perceived to be of less importance in the case of senior leaders because it is their role to be strategists rather than specialists. Alternatively, it may be because researchers have not been looking out for this particular factor, or again it may be that it is more pronounced within independent schools as a whole, or of course it may be because the quality of the middle leader's practice is of more significance in this particular case. Whatever the reasons, there is no doubt that, in the eyes of those interviewed, being the best in one's subject area is key to being able to lead, being the first amongst equals is a theme that plays out with consistency in the coding.

It is not just being the best in your subject area that is deemed to be of significance, leading by example through working hard is also considered to be an integral factor of middle leadership, and a number of participants spoke of their need to be seen to be working as hard, if not harder than their colleagues. Leading by example through being the best in the subject area, and by 'going the extra mile' are seen to be important to the leaders interviewed, and his throws up a number of questions. First, the cohort of interviewees were all leaders, and so whilst it may be their view that being a subject expert and working hard are important, do their team members feel the same way? Second, do the

interviewees come to this conclusion through their own experience, and if so, is it an accurate or valid standpoint. Third, as the researcher has referred to previously, are these views that are confined to the middle leaders in this case, or is it a more widely held view in other educational contexts? Whatever the issues, one thing seems certain, and that is that one's ability as a leading practitioner, and one's work ethic are entirely within the control of the middle leader. They have the ability to improve their subject knowledge over time through personal study or courses, and of course their ability to work harder than anyone else in their department can be readily managed by themselves. The researcher would suggest that this factor is worthy of further research beyond the confines of this case, partly because empirical evidence appears to be lacking, and partly because if the proposition suggested by this code is indeed correct, then it is a factor easily developed by the individual leader themselves without recourse to an outside agent.

5:24 Enabling factor 3: Self-reflection

A number of interviewees spoke about reflecting on their roles, showing that they took some time to reflect and consider:

> *I think it important that you reflect on what you have done and why you have done it.* (Participant 6)

This may be reflecting on any number of different aspects of one's practice, from subject skill to one's interaction with team members, and could be associated with any of the categories discussed above. Some commented on how they self-reflected in order to inform their own experience:

> *Since becoming* (a middle leader)*, I think that in certain situations, I've been considering things a bit more deeply. Reflection is considering things deeply in order to facilitate some sort of positive or right outcome.* (Participant 10)

These responses suggest that a good proportion of the middle leaders in this case do indeed reflect and integrate that reflection into their overall experience. Whilst the concept of self-reflection will, at first glance, look quite straightforward, one interviewee spoke about what they considered to be the standpoint of the reflector, suggesting that we will tend to see things in different ways:

> *I think it depends on how the individual perceives the experience. Because on the one hand, if somebody feels that they have been round the block a couple of times,*

and so they might have seen a similar situation, or heard of a similar situation, which means that they know what to do, then they will deal with it. But that's about self-perception of the experience. So, I don't necessarily think it's down to length of service or even number of years' experience, I think it's how they perceive it. (Participant 9)

No leader works in a vacuum, and interestingly some of the respondents spoke of their reflections on their observations of the actions of others:

I had my own ideas. I'd also effectively had an informal induction by seeing two heads of department I'd worked under at my previous school, seen their contrasting styles, decided what I liked from both, and stolen those ideas. (Participant 16)

Self-reflection then, can involve one's own experiences or the observations of others, and it appears that the way in which one is able to reflect may depend on one's background, experience and mind-set: two people observing the same phenomenon may reflect on it quite differently because of who they are. One challenge to the process of self-reflection is that of making time:

I think we, humans, live our lives at such a frantic pace, we just lurch from situation to situation, crisis to crisis, which leaves us very little time for reflection. Because of the nature of our jobs, the day is chopped into these very small compartments and parcels, we just have to move onto the next one. (Participant 10)

One participant spoke of the stress that they had incurred through trying to do too many things at a time. They spoke of the lessons learned through this:

I'm better at two things. I'm better at saying no, at knowing my limitations, and being able to say: 'We're not doing that', and taking the grumbles on the chin and saying we're just not doing it. And I'm also better I think at saying 'I'd like you to do this' and just completely letting go and saying I've got the trust in the people who work with me to say you're going to do this. And I'm going to essentially leave it to you, entirely. (Participant 12)

…but I think one of the flip sides of being reflective or self-analytical is self-deprecation, it's very close by, and I'd be lying if I said that I hadn't thought at times 'Am I doing the right thing, am I doing the job well enough, am I experienced enough for it?' (Participant 15)

It has been demonstrated through the review of the literature that there are a range of capabilities required by the middle leader, and these can be placed within the three categories of traits, perspectives and skills (Church, 2014; Doe, 2003; Leithwood and Riehl, 2003). A significant number of the participants spoke about reflecting on their own practice, however the aspects of their practice to which they refer fit most neatly into the perspectives category. Self-reflection on one's traits can arguably be quite advantageous, not because reflecting can necessarily make a difference to deeply embedded traits, but because an understanding of one's predilections can allow the leader to gain awareness of their basic and inherent characteristics and so acknowledge the strengths and foibles that accompany them. Further to this, if the leader has an understanding of their team and the synergy within it, then combined with cognisance of their own character traits they should be better placed to place their own capabilities set within the team. However, it is the reflection on one's own experience that should enable the middle leader to build their perspective, and so build their mind maps in accordance with the writings of a number of researchers (Carraccio et al., 2008; Marshall, 2012; West-Burnham and Koren, 2014; Yukl, 2010).

The responses given by participants suggest that middle leaders do indeed reflect and integrate their reflections into their overall experience, although it was suggested by one interviewee that the willingness to do so depends on the perspicacity of the individual involved, and interestingly, some of the respondents spoke of their reflections on the observations of the actions of others. This is something that is not always easy to proactively manage (as the researcher's experience of mentoring NQTs would confirm), not least because of the pressures of time, however the researcher would argue that for a middle leader to observe and reflect on good leadership practice (in the same way that NQTs are encouraged to observe and reflect on good classroom practice) would be of benefit in the building up of mind maps, and this is something that may well be enhanced through the support of a third party mentor or coach. Self-reflection then, can not only involve one's own experiences, but also the observations of others, and it is suggested that the way in which one is able to reflect may depend on one's background and outlook, thus consideration may be given to using a third party to coach the middle leader.

5:25 Enabling factor 4: Knowing yourself and being yourself

Integrity, or the capability of being honest and true to one's own values, is widely accepted as being a key component of leadership, because in order for leaders to inspire confidence, they must be believable, in order to achieve this, they need to be trusted, and for this they need to do what they say they are going to do (Northouse, 2016). In order to be honest to one's own values, any leader needs to know what they are and, as learning begins with the learner developing an awareness of themselves (Parsloe and Ledham, 2009), this will only be achieved through a process of introspection and self-reflection which can and should lead to a degree of self-awareness. The theme of knowing oneself as an important part of their leadership style was discussed by a number of the participants:

> *Your own personality is probably the most important thing because how people look at you is important within any relationship within a group. …you've got to be true to whoever you are for people to understand.* (Participant 6)

> *And then, as you get older, you think 'Well this is me anyway'. You've got to have some of yourself in it as well, you can't pretend to be someone you're not.* (Participant 19)

These comments suggest that, at least in the eyes of the people stating them, being true to themselves is important. One participant explained why he thought it so important:

> *If you can't be true to yourself, you can't expect others to be true. I think that I am a person who has a lot of integrity. That is something that was instilled by my parents.* (Participant 11)

The same participant went on to describe his own leadership style, and it is of note that, at the end of this piece, he explains a little of why he maintains the style that he has:

> *I like to portray a relaxed style of leadership, I tend not to shout a lot, although I will do occasionally. I think I more try to gee people along, and give this paternal image, but whilst I think that people are aware that, whilst there is that paternal image there, there is always something in the background that they know… I'm not just this paternal figure, but there is something behind, and I find that approach works. I have tried other approaches, and frankly it doesn't work for me. I find that this approach does work.* (Participant 11)

A similar view was expressed by another participant:

I think also just playing to what feels natural to me, I think it's important to have your own voice as a teacher, and to know who you are, and what you stand for, and communicate that. (Participant 23)

A key point that comes out of this section is that it is reflection on experiences that enables us to know ourselves better, and it is the 'big hits' or difficult moments that that give us our insights into our own strengths and weaknesses, and show us where the boundaries are. Whilst the leaders' experiences enable them to cross-refer from one situation to another, drawing on differing but relevant situations, it is their perspective that matters at least as much, if not more, than the experience itself. These experiences give the leader the confidence to stand by what they believe in. Taking time to reflect on experiences enables leaders to know themselves better, however teaching as a profession leaves little time during the working week for this process, and middle leadership leaves even less!

It is of note that there is no reference that the researcher has seen in the educational leadership field of study into this area, although both the wider leadership literature and the case study each make note of its importance to the middle leader. The capability of knowing one's own values, and subsequently adhering to those values is one that lies within the hands of the middle leader themselves. It may well be that a third party in the form of a coach may hold a metaphorical mirror up that will assist the middle leader in the process of self-reflection and analysis, however is ultimately up to the leader themselves to come to know what it is they believe in, and to demonstrate that belief to those who would follow.

5.26 Enabling factor 5: Know your followers – build your team

If knowing oneself is a key component of successful leadership, then so too is knowing one's team members, and this is referred to by both Terrell and Leask (1997) and Leithwood et al. (1999) when they enquired what capabilities were sought by classroom teachers in good leaders within their schools. This view was substantiated through the coding that developed out of the interview transcripts which shows that knowing the members of one's team members is an important factor for the middle leaders in the case:

Well I think it is important… It's know your staff, know what their strengths are, know their areas of interest as well. (Participant 20)

I think you've just got to find out about the individuals within your department, genuinely like people, and play to their strengths. (Participant 19)

I think it's getting to know each of the individuals and being able to work with them, and effectively bring out their positives in whatever area that would be. (Participant 25)

A challenge for the middle leader is that they are frequently the conduit, bridge, arbiter of differing views, both between the senior leadership and their team, and amongst the team members themselves. Team members frequently appear to have views that differ from either the middle leader or from the senior leadership within the organisation, and so one of the key ways in which the middle leader can come to know their staff is by listening to them:

You've got to listen. (Participant 5)

It is not only listening that is important, but taking the time to understand them. This piece is from a participant who was a recently appointed middle leader, one who was clearly reflective in his thoughts, and articulate in his responses:

It's got to be fundamentally one of the most crucial things in the job. Because if you don't understand the people working for you, they will pick it up, and it won't work as a team. Because you need to understand each other in order for it to work as a team, and to build that trust and respect, and to know what people's strengths and weaknesses are and dislikes and likes are, and how to work within that. We can't work as objective, linear, analytical robots, we're human beings, we are social creatures. There's an unspoken understanding between people; if it's misjudged, people become harder to work with, and more unpredictable, and less reliable and trustworthy if you get it wrong. Get it right, and it goes the other way. (Participant 8)

A number of points drop out of this single quote. First, there is the idea that, if the leader does not listen to and understand their team members, then those team members will easily spot it, and so forging a functional team will be difficult if not impossible. Second, the participant talks of trust and respect, both of which are mutual concepts; as a rule, we neither trust nor respect other people who do not trust or respect us. The participant then alludes to the unpredictability of people; most of us don't think or talk either objectively or

consistently, but are susceptible to emotional influences such as moods and memory. The participant uses the word 'misjudged', implying that, in all dealings with other people, one needs constantly to make a judgement about their feelings, and so the interaction is in a constant state of flux. These terms of trust and respect were discussed by another participant who, whilst also a recently appointed middle leader, was older and more experienced than the previous respondent:

> *You've got to have the trust and respect. Faith; people must have faith in them.* (Participant 11)

Trust and respect appear to be key features in developing a rapport between the middle leader and their team members, enabling them to build a strong working relationship:

> *And that leads to my modus operandi. Above all, I personally work with a close individual rapport with colleagues, and speak to them as a friend. Or try to. That's the basis on which I conduct my business.* (Participant 18)

This trusting, and building up a rapport was described by one participant as:

> *Building emotional ground.* (Participant 18)

These three words speak volumes to the researcher and describe, he would suggest, one of the fundamental foundations on which any successful leader builds their role. One respondent made a particularly astute observation regarding the leader's ability to differentiate between the follower's actions and the reasons for those actions:

> *An incident or a situation does not arise in isolation, in incident arises in the context of a bigger situation; so, a fall out between two people for example, is the result of a fall out over a wider issue, so that means that what I am able to do now, is not concentrate on the immediate fall out, but try to concentrate and understand the fall out in the wider context. What that means is you are medicating the sin, not the sinner. And that's good. That's a very good skill that managers should have.* (Participant 10)

This participant has elucidated a point which is perhaps missed by many leaders when they become emotionally irritated by one or more of their team. More often than not, it is what the team member is doing rather than who they are that causes friction, and so the participant is arguing is that the leader should look beyond the person in order to identify the root cause of the issue. This way, if identified, the cause can be dealt with or managed,

and the relationship between the middle leader and the member of the team. Misunderstanding or mishandling one's team members can have potentially serious consequences, as a number of participants described:

That person was marking, doing some marking for end of year exams, and I said to this person 'your making is all over the place'. Very gently. And that person went mad, and virtually threatened to leave because I dared criticise. So, the inability to take criticism, and maybe my inability to give criticism, because of that, I think, is a major problem of being a head of department. (Participant 18)

Knowing one's team members and knowing how to handle them is a key capability for middle leaders. Perhaps also having one eye on the culture of the school, because as one participant who was an experienced head of department and had worked in a number of schools said:

I think it better from a leadership or management point of view to say: 'Can I just have a quick word about this, can we have a conversation without formalising it.' I don't think that officious, formal approach would be very popular here.' (Participant 4)

Whilst the researcher can't imagine that an 'officious, formal approach' would be popular anywhere, the suggestion from the participant is that she has a feel for what is best within the context within which she works.

An interesting aspect of reflecting on the experiences of others which was brought to the attention of the researcher was the observation, if not epiphany, that other people think differently to ourselves:

I think that sometimes I get frustrated easily because I have a default position which is to expect of other people what I would do. …so, I have an expectation that people think like me, but of course they don't. People think very differently, and everyone looks at it in a different way. So occasionally that causes friction if you try to impose your way of thinking, your values on someone who doesn't see it like that. (Participant 12)

Reflecting on the researcher's own experience, this is not an uncommon feature amongst people in general. Quite often an assumption is made by individuals that their view of the world is universal, and seen by everyone else in the same way. In leadership, this is arguably

an important point to recognise and, more importantly still, to accept. It may be that, as part of a development programme for emerging leaders, this should be overtly pointed out.

As has been shown previously, team members or followers can often present a challenge to the middle leader, particularly because in a flat organisation such as a school, and the different team players involved can be at quite different stages in their careers. The key points that arise from this coding are that in order to lead other people, one needs to understand them, and to understand them, one needs to listen to them. Taking time to get to know their strengths and weaknesses, building trust and respect will pay dividends, and if you do need to talk to them about issues that concern the department, do so in a non-judgemental way. Ultimately, leadership is a people centred role and, in order to get the best out of people, the leader needs to like the people with whom they work.

5.27 Enabling factor 6: Experience

In this final part of this section on factors that enable, the researcher looks at an aspect of the newly appointed middle leader's development that he hadn't recognised or considered until he undertook this study, that of the emergent leader's previous and/or contemporaneous experience. The data obtained from the interviews was rich, with 15 of the first 20 interviewees making reference to the subject. Any person who is new to a post, and one which they have not undertaken before, will go through some form of 'learning curve'. This section considers the reservoir of experience that newly appointed middle leaders draw into as they assimilate into their new role. The study shows that at least some of the participants look back into their earlier experiences in order to inform their practice:

> *The teacher I am now, is a combination of the places I have taught in and the experiences I have gained.* (Participant 20)

> *I've been teaching a long time, I mean I've been teaching twelve, thirteen years across four different schools, but I think during that time I've gained a lot of experience of all sorts of things. I've run a lot of trips, lots of foreign travel, I've run elections, I've been head of year for a good long time, I've run citizenship.* (Participant 24)

> *I would say the breadth of experience of examining; through leading trips; through doing all of those sorts of things is very, very important; lots of breadth of*

experience. You know, go and find out... have experience of all the things you are going to have to do as a head of department. (Participant 24)

Each of these statements are typical of those who had a range of previous teaching experiences, both within the school in which the case is based, and in other schools. As one might expect, much of the past experience was rich, with middle leaders having assumed a range of responsibilities. Interestingly, the experience that a number of participants spoke of came from roles that they had held (or indeed continued to hold) in spheres completely removed from the school context:

I worked with groups of people for a long time in what might seem a completely separate context, so for instance in music and in restaurants and so I've led teams of people, and I've worked with groups where you've got to have a shared idea, and you need to have a shared vision that you work towards, and you need to assign roles and I suppose all the general leadership skills that I would think of. I've been in positions where I've developed or used those in the past, yes. They weren't new to me. (Participant 12)

Whilst this participant's description of his wider experience was the most illuminating example, it was by no means the only such story. This theme of drawing on personal experience gained from outside the school environment proved to be quite common, and one which the interviewees appeared to recognise the worth of. One interviewee in particular emphasised how important he feels it is to have a wider perspective:

I'd say get involved in stuff, get a life outside school, get some hobbies.... outdoor pursuits, any sort of sport, music, theatre, drama. I think it's important to have a life. (Participant 4)

Personal experience both within and without the context of the school appears relevant and beneficial. A third source of experience appears to be that of tapping into the knowledge held by other members of staff, and participants appeared to be discerning and discriminatory about who they approach about what, approaching specific people for advice at specific times on a 'need to know' basis:

I would go to certain people at certain times (and ask them) *'What would you do in this situation, and why would you do that?'* (Participant 8)

Newly appointed middle leaders appeared to have a 'feel' for whom to use for advice. Certainly, there were no interviewees who expressed uncertainty or difficulty in finding the right person, although it could be argued that this could show that none of the interviewees were prepared to state this during interview. There was a raft of views expressing the view that it helped for there to be a close association between the middle leader seeking advice, and the source of advice:

> *I think that you have to be closely associated with those particular individuals because looking at my colleagues, it's very, very difficult for me to see from a distance, it's only when you are working with people that you see those qualities… as I say, those you're closely associated with, and you pick out those best qualities* (Participant 13).

These findings align with the contention of Danielson (2016) that professional development can be enhanced through colleagues learning from one another. There is no telling from the findings whether participants become more closely associated with some colleagues, and then tap in to them for advice, or whether they begin by asking for help, and subsequently develop a rapport. However, there is no doubt that, over time, emergent leaders appear to develop a close network of people they feel they can rely on for specific advice. Three participants spoke of observing a range of different styles amongst leaders within the school, and picking out the contrasts:

> *I've seen how heads of departments, pastoral leaders operate, and I've plucked my approach from lots of different leaders that I've liked or respected.* (Participant 4)

People not only learn from what they see are good examples, but they also pick up on those aspects of leadership they believe they should avoid, so it is clear from the evidence that newly appointed middle leaders learn by observation and by both copying and avoiding the practice that they see. A number of the participants appeared to actively seek out mentors:

> *I still use teacher X as a sounding board, for anything that is my idea, my plan, my way of doing things; but just before I let the ink dry, I'll say 'What do you think?' And it may be a yes or a no. It might not influence what I do anyway, but just a kind of reassurance thing.* (Participant 12)

This suggests that, during this transitional period of middle leadership, leaders have a sense of what they want to do, but also need reassurance from someone who is more

experienced than themselves. Such leaders appear to have a desire to have the freedom to make their own decisions. The researcher considers this noteworthy because it shows that whilst there are times when middle leaders are looking for advice, there are also times when they are seeking reassurance. The interviews suggest that such leaders are open to learning and are reflective on their practice, being particularly appreciative of others who can help them see things through a different lens, thus enabling them to develop as aspirant leaders. The data also points to middle leaders integrating experience into their practice over time, thus moving from a position of being a novice to that of expert as described by Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1980) For example, one newly appointed middle leader said:

> *I underestimated the staff factor. The management of the staff is the biggest part of the job, it's not the boys, it's dealing with staff, and staff making your job far more complicated. I wish I'd known more about that… that's what I've learnt and probably underestimated before coming into the job.* (Participant 5)

However, a very experienced middle leader spoke much more confidently and intuitively about this aspect of her role:

> *So, I think you've got to find out about the individuals within your department, genuinely like people, play to their strengths, and if you can encourage them to do things, even if they're not happy, then encourage them, and see if you can actually get them to see the benefits, then that's great.* (Participant 19)

Whilst a middle leader who is clearly a reflective practitioner made the following statement which illuminates the process of going from novice to competent:

> *I have more experience… and a wealth of knowledge that I didn't have when I originally started the job… And that was starting to happen in the last few months. I could feel that I was getting a better grasp of the system, of how things worked, how people work politically and socially, and what the actual job entailed… so I was starting to work out the game so to speak.* (Participant 8)

These final two items of data show that there is a fifth form of experience, that of 'learning on the job'. Of course, this is not available to someone as they take on a post for the first time, it is only accumulated whilst in post. It is of note that the references to experience were much more significant than the researcher was anticipating, and that the middle

leaders' experiences came from different and distinct sources (prior experience within the school context; parallel experience from a different context; tapping into the knowledge of others who are more experienced) was quite a surprise. This accumulation of, and reflection on experience appears to be a powerful component in the middle leader's capabilities set.

5.28 Summary of the challenging and enabling factors

The researcher has shown a clear, auditable process to demonstrate how the data gleaned through the case study has been analysed in order to present the three themes of: Context; Challenging factors and Enabling factors. Through a constant comparative coding method whereby the researcher has interpreted the data, looking for patterns or groups of similar data, he has constructed the codes, nested within the themes, described and analysed above. He has shown that there are two key findings to be drawn from this process: first, that there are a range of identifiable factors involved in middle leadership, and that these factors can be categorised into those that challenge and those that enable. Second, the challenging factors tend to be outside the control of the middle leader whilst the enabling factors tend to be within their control. It is from this observation that he recommends that leadership development programmes should focus on those factors over which middle leaders do have a degree of control, and in the next part of this chapter, he homes in on these enabling factors in order to ascertain how their development can be best incorporated into a learning programme for newly appointed middle leaders. It is argued by the researcher that this is an important addition to the discourse on middle leadership in schools as he has seen no published work on this theme. The research question asked whether effective support mechanisms could be identified for those in the formative stages of middle leadership, and the study to this point has not fully explored this. Through a case study in the independent sector, data has been produced which, through the researcher's coding process and interpretation, has illuminated the lot of the middle leader in this context and shown that they engage with identifiable factors that are both challenging and enabling. The next stage is to use the findings gained as a foundation or secure platform on which to project forward and recommend effective support mechanisms.

To begin, the researcher recommends that, from the point of view of supporting mechanisms, those factors which challenge should be identified for newly appointed middle leaders, and then largely ignored because they cannot be changed or influenced. It

is useful for the middle leader to know that they are there if only for the comfort of knowing that other middle leaders will face similar challenges, however there is little point in fretting over things that cannot be changed. The researcher has, using a combination of established literature and data, demonstrated that the there is a difference between management and leadership, and that the middle leader requires both to be successful on their role. The researcher has also drawn together previous research which points to leadership capabilities involving traits which we can recognise and acknowledge but cannot change; skills which fall into the area of management and which can be taught; and perspective which is informed through experience. Through this logical process, the researcher contends that it is in the acquisition, development, acknowledgement of and reflection on experience that is a fertile area for exploration for the development of middle leaders, and it is to this area that he now turns to more deeply explore the potential for leadership development.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

6:1 Introduction

In this study, the researcher set out to investigate the needs of middle leaders during the transitional period when they are first appointed. His reasoning for doing this was his recognition that, whilst Newly Qualified Teachers have a statutory entitlement to a formal, structured support mechanism of induction there is, in the independent school within which he works, no such mechanism for the induction of newly appointed middle leaders. Throughout the study, it was the researcher's aim to shed light on *what* newly appointed middle leaders need during this transitional period as they moved from leading and managing children to leading and managing adults, however as the study progressed, he also became more involved in *how* these needs could best be met. As this chapter sets out to show, the researcher has met both these aims, although a number of other findings have emerged that the researcher was not expecting at the outset.

First, the research has uncovered, just how little we know about the subject of middle leadership in schools from an empirical viewpoint. The corpus of academic study into school leadership at senior (Head teacher or Principal) level is far greater than that of middle leadership. More striking still, is the lack of research into the transitional period as classroom teachers become middle leaders for the first time. This blank spot in the research is of note because, if, as both the findings of this study, and the literature assert, leadership in schools is important (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003), and that a leader requires different competencies to those of a classroom teacher (Bush, 2012; Bush, 2008; OECD, 2008), then it stands to reason that the most important and effective time for leadership training is when it is first undertaken. If leadership induction is undertaken before or during the transition period, then not only should the transition period be quicker and less painful, but the middle leader will put into place a foundation of good practice that will serve them if and when they are promoted to more senior leadership positions. The second finding of note is the complete lack of any research into the subject in the independent sector. As this sector educates 7% of the UK school population, it is not unreasonable for the wider community to have some knowledge of the leadership that takes place within it. Is the middle leadership context within this environment similar to that within maintained schools, and if so can middle leaders in the two sectors learn from each other, or are the differences so great that they are incompatible? Whilst the researcher has confined his

interviews to the single case, and makes no case for generalisability, his long experience of liaising with colleagues from the maintained sector would lead him to suggest that the two sectors have far more in common than they have differences, indeed much of the feedback from the interviewees aligns with writings on leadership in the wider context (for example Northouse, 2016).

6:2 Key findings

The researcher has made a number of significant findings in this study. The most notable observation is that there are identifiable factors that present a challenge to the middle leader, along with factors that enable the middle leader to overcome them. Whilst in itself this is not a revelation (much coaching and mentoring is based upon the simple principle of identifying barriers and developing solutions), this is the first time the researcher has seen middle leadership analysed and described in this way. That the challenging factors appear in the main to be external to the middle leader and outside their control means that this can be made explicit in a leadership development programme. If the transitional middle leader is unable to influence the expectations of the organisation, or if they inherit a department that consists of both an NQT and the Head teacher, then they must accept that these factors cannot be changed, but must be addressed using different means. The researcher contends that, because there are identifiable enabling factors which are within the control of the middle leader, then these should form the basis of a development programme; it makes more sense to focus on the things that can be changed than those that cannot.

A further key finding has been in the area of traits, skills and perspectives which have been discussed in different guises by a number of researchers (Church, 2014; Doe, 2003; Leithwood and Riehl, 2003). Combined with studies into skills acquisition (Carraccio et al, 2008; Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1980; Sergiovani, 1985; West-Burnham and Koren, 2014) it provides a compelling argument for middle leaders being encouraged to reflect on their experiences (as identified in the researcher's interview schedules) in order for them to develop their personal perspectives. If this reflection is supported through 1:1 coaching/mentoring, then this process has the potential to help build up the mental maps that leaders need when working in a reactive situation (Breaux, 2016). A key observation of this study is that, for any group of middle leaders, there is much that is different, yet much is also the same. The traits and perspectives of each of us will be different, and there

is no accounting for the range of strengths, foibles and idiosyncrasies that our followers bring. However, we all work within the expectations of our parent organisation and we all have the capacity to be lead practitioner in our subject area, and each of us can work very hard. This points to a leadership development programme that has a combination of central themes but with the capacity for individual tailoring.

A final finding worthy of mention is that of the 'complex matrix' (Busher and Harris, 2000) or 'web' (Participant 20). When we talk of 'leading' we tend to think of a process that is enacted upon 'followers' in a hierarchal pattern. In schools however, the picture is much more fluid than this, and as such the study has shown that the middle leader needs to influence not only those below, but also those to the side and those above. Their positional power does not award them the luxury of doing this, and so the power of influence as a leader becomes particularly marked in the context of the school. The empirical study into the area of middle leadership in schools is currently sparse, and the researcher has thrown further light onto an under researched area. For the researcher, the most notable finding of this study is the discovery of just how much uncharted territory there remains in this area, and how much more there is for us yet to find out.

6:3 Using experience to inform mental maps

The more experienced middle leaders interviewed within this study appeared on the whole to have a sound knowledge and appreciation of their own experience and the relevant aspects on which they could draw, thus confirming the findings of researchers such as Raelin (2007) and OECD (2008) who contend that teachers develop intuitive knowledge over time through the accumulation of their experience. As has been identified and discussed above, this experience would appear to come from five identifiable areas. First, experience that comes from similar the roles that they have played within a school or schools before they were appointed to their current post; second, experience that comes from different roles in the same or other schools; third, experience that has been acquired from leadership and management activities outside the school bounds; fourth, the experience of others as a resource that newly appointed middle leaders tap into through asking for help; fifth, the experience that comes with 'learning on the job'. This amalgam of the middle leader's own experience, alloyed with the shared experience of other staff, can provide a rich repository of tacit knowledge on which they can draw.

Whilst, during the interview schedule, the researcher was not looking specifically for different levels of reaction to leadership situations during the process of moving from analytical to intuitive, there are signs that this is indeed the case. Combining this observed transition from novice to expert (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1980) with the proposition that the leader's capabilities can be variously defined as traits, skills and perspectives (Church, 2014; Doe, 2003; Leithwood and Riehl, 2003), and it is contended that experience, wherever it comes from, feeds most readily into perspectives. The newly appointed, transitional middle leader may well have limited leadership experience, and they may also have novice reflective skills, and combining these gives them unrefined, disjointed mental maps, and so they work analytically. The experienced middle leader on the other hand has comprehensive experience which, combined with more highly refined reflection skills, leads to more sophisticated mental maps which they can draw on rapidly in order to act intuitively. It is recommended therefore that this is an area of particular focus for leadership development, and one which invites two questions: how does the middle leader build their repository of experience, and how can the middle leader be helped in developing their self-reflection capability? The interviews give an answer to the first question, whilst the literature gives direction to the latter. Experience can and should ideally be built up in a range of spheres, both within the school and beyond its boundaries. For example, being a form tutor, taking trips off site, or rewriting the scheme of work for Y7 will each give experience which the middle leader can use to develop their mental maps. Likewise, in order to enrich the aspirant middle leader's wider but transferable experience, they may partake of activities such as playing in a folk band, being the secretary of a mountaineering club or helping organise a local beer festival. Research recorded in the literature show that coaching has the potential to support a transitional middle leader in developing their self-reflection skills, and this is recommended by a number of studies (for example OECD, 2008; West-Burnham and Koren, 2014). The combination of these two factors - varied, accumulated experience combined with effective self-reflection - has the potential to help the middle leader develop sophisticated mental maps, and it is contended that a proactive scheme of development will be more effective than would be the case if left to chance. On the basis of the findings of this study, a leadership development programme should have the facility to enable both factors.

6:4 Mental maps: management and leadership

In the chapter reviewing the literature (Chapter 2), the researcher gave some consideration to the terms management and leadership, and the researcher is content to work from the assertion that management involves the maintenance of systems while leadership involves people and direction. He is also comfortable with the contention that the middle leaders within schools (Heads of Departments for example) have to both lead people and manage assets. However, the findings of this study build further on these assertions. If management involves the maintenance of systems, such as controlling a budget; planning timetable requirements according to need and resource; setting an agenda and chairing a meeting, then these competencies come within the category of skills and so can be taught. However, if leadership involves tasks such as setting and communicating a vision; ensuring that all team members are aware of, and understand that vision, or influencing those to the side and above them, then a more complex set of capabilities is required. Such capabilities will not be picked up through shallow learning, such as can be delivered through a one-hour PowerPoint presentation, but are capabilities that will be developed over time through deeper learning techniques, as the learner integrates acquired experience into their 'perspective'. This is a key component of this thesis, because if the role of the Head of Department in school has moved over time from that of administrator to that of manager and more recently to that of leader, then the training required by them must change and develop also. Leading is a complex business that requires sophisticated learning techniques which, as those models of practice examined in Chapter 2 testify, take time and practice.

6:5 Commonalities and differences

The analysis of the findings exposes something of a paradox in that, whilst every participant in the study demonstrates that they see things differently, because each is an individual, working within a different context, and each has followers who display differing strengths and foibles, there are also significant similarities between them. Turner (2007) notes that it is of limited value to try to generalise about middle leadership in schools because of the huge variety of roles, and so the notion that a 'one size fits all' programme of development is dismissed by a range of researchers (Bush, 2009; Martin et al., 2014; Thorpe and Bennett-Powell, 2014). It is also contended that not only can there be no single programme that fits all scenarios, but that we should also while guard against uncritically bringing in leadership development platforms from other domains because the contexts within which teachers'

work is unique (Brundrett, 1999). This said, the data drawn from the interviews in this study show clearly that there are indeed similarities, not only across the field of education, but also through cross referencing to other fields. In essence, all leaders face challenges, and all leaders use capabilities to overcome them, and when distilled out through empirical study, the challenges and capabilities have more in common than one might at first suppose. This has significant implications for the design of a research programme because it shows that not only can general factors be covered, but also that research gleaned from other fields may well prove to be applicable to those leading within schools, although it is accepted that it will need to be adapted to suit the local conditions.

6:6 A model of leadership development

This chapter has analysed findings that have been identified in the Data Presentation and Analysis section of the thesis. The researcher is of no doubt that there is more that could be drawn from this repository of interview transcriptions, however for reasons of propriety, he has confined the Data Presentation and Analysis to the boundaries set by the research question. Within this analysis, there lie two theories, both of which have emerged from the researcher's study, and neither of which have been seen anywhere else. Firstly, there is the theory that the factors that impact on the middle leader can be divided into those that challenge and those that enable. The second is the theory that leadership skills are acquired over time as the leader acquires and integrates experience, and moves from novice to expert, creating more sophisticated mental maps as they do so. The researcher has spent some time putting these two theories next to one another, looking for ways in which they can be combined in order to further achieve the aims of the research question. The graphic representation below is the result of this process, and brings together in one model the key findings that have emerged, both from the literature and the primary research.
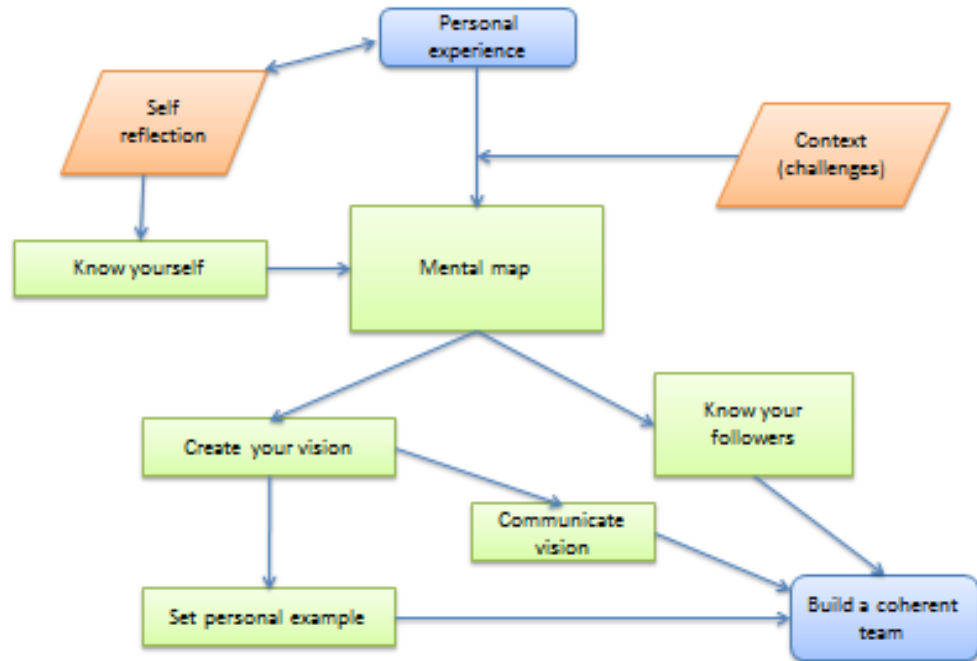
Fig 7. Experience - mental maps - enabling factors - leadership.

It is of note that this model is positioned within the 'perspectives' area of capabilities discussed by Church (2014) and others. The researcher contends that, whilst a knowledge of one's personality traits is useful from the point of view of understanding why one views the world in a particular way, the ways in which these deeply rooted dispositions can be changed or developed is very limited. Conversely, skills such as how to chair a meeting, whilst useful, are tasks of management rather than leadership and can be readily taught through didactic means. The research points to perspectives as being at the heart of leadership; experiences that have been built up and reflected on over time which inform and, through reflection, enrich leaders' mental maps, and so this is the area that the model engages (Claxton et al., 2016).

The model starts with the personal experience of the leader. Whilst this is not emphasised in the literature, it was a factor that came over very clearly in the interviews, where participants clearly drew on prior, contemporary and 'borrowed' experience to inform their decision-making process. Whilst it appears clear that the middle leader draws on previous experience to inform their mental maps, there are two further factors that will have a

bearing on the maps created. The first is the context or contexts within which the leader operates. As an example, the researcher's personal mental map for leadership within an educational context is well developed, and so he can work quickly and intuitively in that environment. However, this mental map would not fit the context of, say, soldiering or fire-fighting therefore, as contended by the literature, the context within which the leader operates is a key factor in leadership development because it contributes toward the creation of the leader's personal mental map. The second factor is the researcher's capacity for self-reflection. It can be argued that no amount of experience will inform a mental map unless it is reflected upon, analysed and integrated into the whole. This self-reflection will not only refine the mental map as it relates to the context, but will also enable the leader to know themselves better as a whole person. From the personalised mental map that the middle leader is developing over time, two strengths or assets can follow. To begin with, the mental map provides the foundation for the vision that is needed by the leader. As the research has shown, the creation and articulation of a vision is, whilst arguably difficult, seen by many as an essential component of leadership. The researcher contends that it is from the leader's mental map based on previous experience that the leader is able to project into the future, and the more coherent and sophisticated the map, the more realistic the projection is likely to be. He would further argue that it is personal vision which enables the leader to lead by example, in other words it is much easier to walk the walk if you know where the journey is taking you. Second, the mental map supports the leader's capacity for knowing others. If a leader knows their context, knows their task, and knows themselves, they are in a better position to know their team members because they can view their strengths and weaknesses through the lens of the vision, and this is important because it is the personal strengths of team members relative to the tasks that need to be identified, acknowledged and utilised by the leader. Through articulating a clear vision, combined with knowing the team members and leading by example, the leader is able to build a coherent team. The members of that team are more likely to follow the leader because he or she sets the direction, sets a personal example and, through knowing the team members, builds trust. This model is built on empirical research and provides a new 'temporary conceptual theory' (Thomas, 2011) on which the final conclusions of this study are based.

6:7 Recommendations for practice

The findings of this study have confirmed previous research which shows that middle leadership is both important to the learning of the pupils within the school, and that it involves capabilities that are different to those required by the successful classroom teacher. In this case, it is clear that there is no formal induction for those newly appointed to middle leadership positions, although there appears to be a strong informal network of support, and the evidence suggests that middle leaders do indeed reach a point of confidence and competence in their role. Whilst a number of researchers' guard against generalisable claims of leadership, arguing that schools are too diverse for a 'one size fits all' approach, and others suggest that there is no single, all-embracing theory of educational leadership, the research points to there being commonalities across the interviewees, and that these commonalities align with recorded research (for example, Leithwood and Reihl, 2003). From this, the researcher contends that middle leadership in this independent school has more in common with other educational contexts than differences, which has implications for the cross-fertilisation of ideas and practice of leadership developmental programmes. On this basis, the researcher is confident in the presentation of recommendations, however it is for the reader to decide upon the relevance of the findings in accordance with their own context. On the basis of the analysis of the findings of this study, the researcher would recommend that a formal induction period for middle leaders would be advantageous because it would have the potential to shorten the transitional period, thus moving the middle leader to a position of confidence and competence in their role more quickly. Such a programme over the current situation of no leadership developmental programme would have the advantages that improvement would take place through organised learning rather than idiosyncratic experimentation by the individual (Elmore, 2000), would increase the likelihood of middle leaders performing effectively (Bush and Middlewood, 2005) and, over time, provide a pool of people whose development would make them more suitable for senior positions, thus providing a vehicle for succession planning (Sergiovanni, 2001). The next part of this chapter describes a way by which this recommendation may be realised.

6:8 Model for middle leader development programme

Based on the recommendations discussed above, combined with the distillation of good practice from around the globe as identified in the literature review, the researcher now

presents a model leadership development programme that is research based. For illustration purposes, the model assumes that, there are between 8 and 16 participants with a range of ages between early twenties and mid-forties. The model allows for a wide range of experiences both within school and outside, and from those teachers who are preparing to embark on leading and managing adults for the very first time to those who already have significant levels of experience both within and outside the school. It is expected that a proportion of the participants will be unable to make all the scheduled sessions for legitimate reasons. Ideally, the participants will come from more than one school, enabling them to network beyond the confines of their own institution. The programme is designed to last between 12 and 24 months, depending on practical factors such as programming of the sessions within teachers' busy schedules. Whilst this is quite a common cohort for leadership development programmes, the model can be adapted for a wider range of participants (e.g. smaller numbers; distance learning). The programme is divided into three phases. Phase 1 is the introductory phase; phase 2 is the learning and development phase; phase 3 is the reflection and evaluation phase.
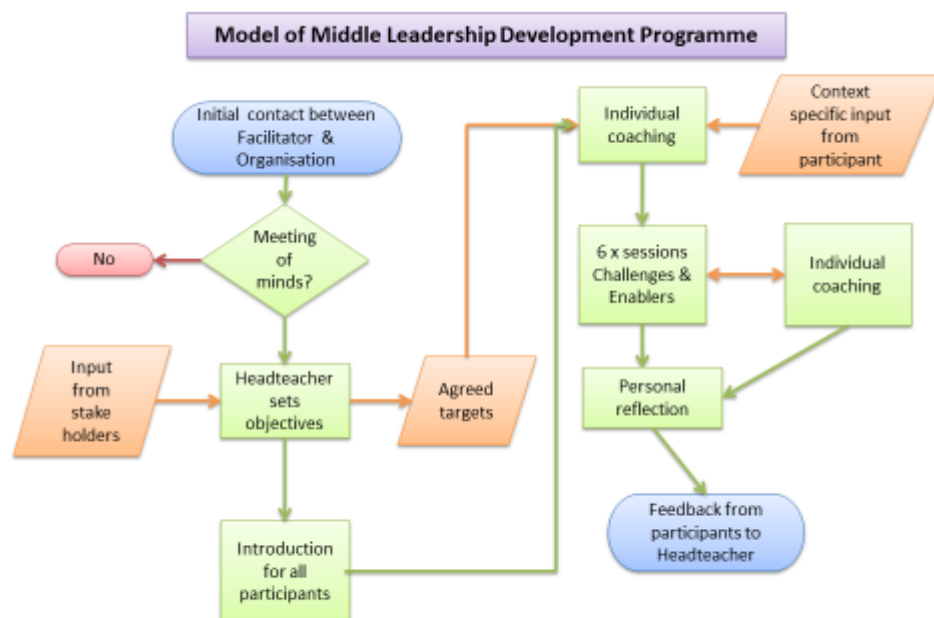
Fig. 8. Model of Middle leadership development programme

- **Component 1: Liaison with the Head teacher or Principal**

    Whilst it is contended that there are significant commonalities to leadership in different educational contexts, a significant number of researchers advise against providing development programmes that are 'off-the-shelf' because successful leadership must engage with the context within which it finds itself, and no two schools will be the same, thus caution should be exercised in transferring good practice uncritically from one school to another (Brundrett, 1999; OECD, 2008; Simonet and Tett, 2012; West-Burnham and Koren, 2014; Wheeler et al., 2007). Because of this, it is essential that any person proposing a leadership development course for middle leaders should firstly speak with the Head Teacher or Principal of the school in order to build up a clear picture, both of the context and of the perceived needs of the school as seen through the eyes of the stakeholders.

- **Component 2: General introduction to the programme**

    This session is designed to last for approximately two hours, and has two purposes. First, it allows the presenter of the programme to introduce themselves, explain the rationale behind the programme and outline the structure of the programme. Second, it gives the opportunity for the participants to get to know one another because it has been noted that the opportunity to network is amongst best practice in the field (OECD, 2008). During this session, participants will be directed towards resources (either electronic or hard copy) that will enable them to reflect on specific issues or personal case studies that they can draw on as the programme proceeds, drawing on the assertion by Jackson and Parry (2011) that exercises are most useful when they are directly relevant to the participant's experience.

- **Component 3: Individual coaching session with each participant**

    A paradox that has been illuminated by this study is that middle leaders face similar issues, that can be addresses using particular ways, yet because each has a personal biography (Greenfield and Ribbins, 1993), and each works in a different context, the perception and weighting of the challenges will be different, as will be the ways in which those challenges can be best addressed; there is no 'one size fits all', although the research points to there being areas of development that would be of benefit to all newly appointed middle leaders, for example the development of a vision for their department. This individual coaching session will enable the

participant to reflect on their own values (Day, 2003; Day et al., 2011) and articulate specific issues that they may have, thus enabling them to begin the self-reflection that is essential early on in the programme. It will also give the programme leader a vehicle by which they can pick up both individual and common issues (there may for example be a particular matter within the school that is common to a number of the participants). In this way, the programme leader can adapt the subsequent sessions in order that they are bespoke to their audience. Finally, it is through this process that the setting of targets can be formulated.

- **Component 4: Setting of targets**

  As a part of the introductory phase, the participants should formulate a series of targets as recommended by Guskey (2000). These targets can be captured and specified by the participant through either electronic or hard copy means, and it would be expected that they would be 'SMART' (specific; measurable; achievable; relevant; time-bound). These targets need to be set in order to give a degree of accountability to the programme. They should be seen and agreed by the Head Teacher or Principal who can subsequently be offered feedback on the extent to which they have been achieved.

- **Component 5: 6 x interactive sessions**

  Each of these sessions is designed around one or more challenging factor and one or more enabling factor. Bearing in mind the researcher's recommendation that the programme should be bespoke around the identified needs of the participants, the researcher suggests the following 2 hour sessions: Session 1: Defining your role - writing a personal job description. Session 2: Knowing yourself. Session 3: Culture and organisational expectations - drawing up a vision. Session 4: The challenge and opportunity of your team members - get to know them and build a team. Session 5: Piggy in the middle - leading downwards and leading upwards. Session 6: Time management, and drawing on personal experience.

- **Component 6: Individual coaching/mentoring**

  This is an important part of the programme because 1:1 support through coaching or peer learning is identified as a key component by a number of writers (Hewes and Patterson, 2012; OECD, 2008). It can be undertaken by the programme leader, it can be undertaken by senior/experienced leaders within the school, or it can be undertaken through peer coaching. The important thing is that participants have

the opportunity to reflect, articulate and discuss both the issues they face and the enablers that are available to them in order to overcome the challenges.

- **Component 7: Feedback**

  This final component would be designed to enable the participants to reflect on how the programme contributed to the school's capacity, and helped the learners in the school. It is acknowledged in the literature that it is difficult to quantify (Bush 2009; Simkins et al., 2007), however this is no reason to not try, and any sponsor of a development programme could reasonably expect feedback on how successful the programme was. The researcher would recommend a degree of triangulation in this task with feedback coming through a member of the senior team, a peer and a member of the leader's team. This feedback should ideally be set against the SMART targets identified towards the beginning of the programme, whilst also having the flexibility to capture unexpected or unplanned progress.

This proposed programme addresses each of the factors that have been drawn from this study, whilst remaining adaptable enough to allow each participant to tailor the learning to their own needs. It allows for participants to use the programme for professional motives (i.e. to improve practice within their school) or personal motives (i.e. to improve specific aspects of their own practice, perhaps with an eye on promotion). This programme also draws on good practice as identified in the literature review which collectively recommends the following vehicles for delivery:
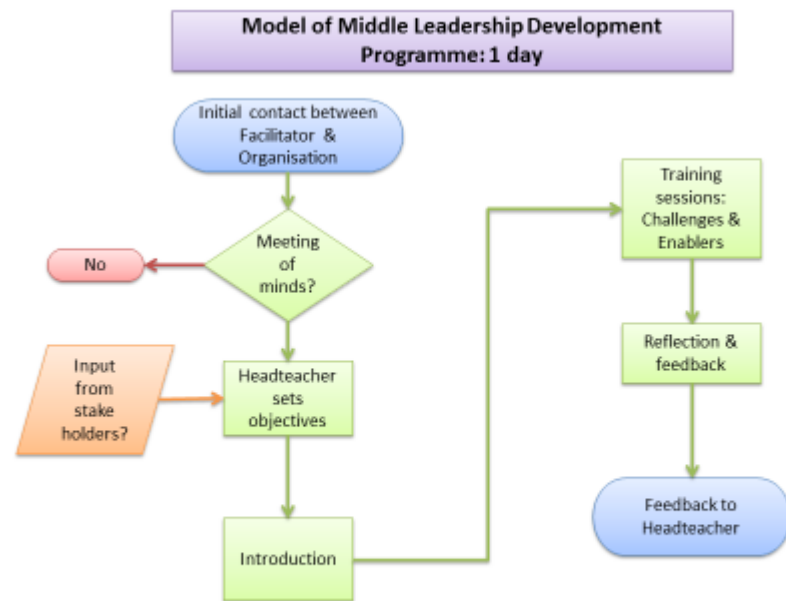
- Self-reflection
- E-learning
- Mentoring
- Coaching
- In-school work
- Practical strategies
- Problem based activities
- Case studies
- Networking

This is done through a combination of participants working alone; having 1:1 support; liaising with colleagues within their own school, and (ideally) networking with colleagues from other organisations. This blended approach to learning is recommended through a

rage of literature on leadership development (Bush, 2009; Hewes and Patterson, 2012; Jackson and Parry, 2011). In essence then, the researcher's model grafts his findings of *what* to include in a middle leadership development programme onto tried and tested methods of *how* best to deliver it. It is of note that, in the independent sector, there is a particular challenge of scale. In the school within which the case is based, there have been, over recent years, a number of appointments to middle leadership roles. However, the number appointed in any year is small (usually fewer than five), with no appointments made in some years. Because the school is geographically remote from any other independent schools (the nearest similar school is some 25 miles away), it would be a challenge to gather a cluster of transitional middle leaders to run the programme recommended above. It may well be that an independent school would have only one transitional middle leader at any time, and so if it is not practicable to corral a cohort of six or more together, the alternatives would be to deliver an adapted version of the programme with perhaps just one participant, or to develop the resources in order that they can be delivered remotely (1:1 sessions through video conferencing for example).

For reasons of cost, conflicting commitments or time, schools may find themselves unable to commit to such a major investment, and may elect to opt for a curtailed version of the above. Whilst the study recommends that the model above is a preferred option, a pragmatic approach needs to be adopted and so the following is a one-day version of the model:

Model of Middle Leadership Development Programme: 1 day

Initial contact between Facilitator & Organisation

Meeting of minds?

No

Input from stake holders?

Headteacher sets objectives

Introduction

Training sessions: Challenges & Enablers

Reflection & feedback

Feedback to Headteacher

Fig 9. 1 day programme

6:9 Summary of conclusions

The research question bounded the literature review which, in turn, gave direction to the five propositions or 'temporary theories (Thomas, 2011), and these propositions gave a structure to the interview schedule. A process of constant comparative coding of the data, was undertaken, produced from the transcriptions of the semi-structured interviews. As the researcher continually compared new data to the categories established in the initial coding, and strove to develop the categories' properties, the coding moved back and forth as the data informed the coding, the coding informed the interviews and the interviews produced the data (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000). The researcher had an 'Aha Moment' approximately half way through the interview schedule where, whilst coding, he spotted a pattern whereby he could identify factors that challenge the middle leaders interviewed, along with factors that enable them to perform their role. This was recorded as a graphic in his journal. Through this ongoing, dynamic, fully recorded and auditable process, the researcher identified and classified a range of factors that both challenge and enable the middle leader. The evidence is substantial, with 391 individual items of data supporting the 15 themes recorded and analysed, and that there is clear congruence within the data lends support to the internal validity of the study (de Vaus, 2001). The researcher has presented

the data analysis both to a number of the participants and to external audiences, and the feedback has been unreservedly supportive, thus giving respondent validity to the findings (Silverman, 2001).

This analysis of the data has provided insight into a number of the areas that surround the middle leaders who took part in this case study. The researcher has navigated through this narrative by dividing it into three areas: the context of middle leadership in the school within which the study is based; the propositions that were drawn from the literature review; the identification and explanation of challenging and enabling factors. It is from these that the researcher has been able to contend that the acquisition and integration of experience to create 'perspective' from which he presents a new model or 'temporary conceptual tool' (Thomas, 2011). Whilst this draws on previous recorded research, there is nothing that the researcher has located in the literature that looks at middle leadership in this light, and so he can confidently claim that the model is an original and fresh perspective on middle leadership in the educational context. Whilst there is little, if anything in this piece of research that contradicts published research found elsewhere, the findings are in an area of school leadership that has had little attention paid to it previously. The researcher contends that this is because much of the published literature into educational leadership looks into senior rather than middle leadership, and therefore middle leadership in schools is an as yet unexplored area as propounded by Spillane et al. (1999) and Thorpe and Bennett-Powell (2014). Because there is so little empirical study into middle leadership, particularly during the transitional period, the researcher would contend that much of the content of leadership programmes has been developed through speculative processes. He would argue that it is only through the process of rigorous research that a solid knowledge base can be constructed upon which leadership development programmes can be drawn up, and he thus argues for integrating some of these findings into future middle leadership programmes.

This case study gives an insight into leadership within the independent sector. It is for the reader to decide the degree to which the description of this context is similar or dissimilar to their own, however in setting the data against the literature it would appear that the middle leaders in the case meet similar challenges to middle leaders in other contexts and, furthermore, they develop similar strategies to overcome them. Bearing in mind that there is no previous empirical study into this area, this is useful knowledge because if the middle

leadership context described here is similar to other educational contexts, then the independent sector should be able to draw on leadership development practice from other areas also.

6:10 Challenges faced in the research

The researcher can report that there were no significant challenges that faced the research as it progressed, and this is in part, he suspects, because of the time spent in the construction of the research question. With support and advice from his Director of Studies, Professor Mark Brundrett, the researcher worked carefully on both the structure and the wording of the research question, reworking it many times during the first months of the study. This investment of time and effort paid off because throughout the study, the researcher referred to the research question on a regular basis. If a line of enquiry did not match the question then he left it alone, and at no point did the study move into an area where the researcher considered changing or adapting the research question. This has enabled the researcher's thesis to come full circle in that the model for a leadership development programme above fits the parameters laid out in the original research question. It is of note that, whilst the review of the literature is extensive, there is real paucity in the quantity of empirical research into the area of middle leadership, something that has surprised the researcher. As he has suggested previously, there may be sound reasons why educational researchers concentrate more on senior leadership in schools and, whilst this means that middle leadership is a fertile ground for discovery, it also means that there is little in the way of previous work to reference. Because of this, the researcher's literature review has been something of an eclectic mix of tangential research. He has been able to draw on a range of research literature into areas that include senior school leadership; HE leadership; leadership in commercial contexts; along with varied texts that link to the research question.

During the early stages of the study, the researcher was minded to interview participants in different schools in order to provide a range of views. Through consultation with his Director of Studies, he elected not to follow this route. As such, this dissertation gives the reader an insight into the middle leadership within an independent school, thus providing the research community with a resource that has hitherto been unavailable. The concept of 'temporary theories' (the propositions) provided by Thomas (2011) proved to be an invaluable tool for the researcher because it gave him a pragmatic conceptual structure

which was linked directly to the research question through the literature review, and which enabled him to construct a relevant and bounded interview schedule. These propositions also gave the researcher the categories within which he could place the initial coding, thus enabling him to work systematically and build a logical foundation before the data began to present its own codes. All 25 interviewees gave of their time freely, indeed some just volunteered an interview when they heard of the researcher's project, and the researcher is deeply indebted to each of them.

When the researcher has presented his initial findings at seminars and conferences, a question has been asked on a number of occasions is that of the relationship between the researcher and the participants, and whether this gets in the way of the objective truth. The researcher makes a number of points on this. First, the questions asked of the participants were as open as possible within the aim of eliciting responses within a defined area. The transcriptions show that, in each of the 25 interviews, the proportion of participant answer to interview question is high. Second, there is much consistency across the answers. In fact, one of the reasons that the researcher drew the line at 25 interviewees is that he sensed that the evidence was saturated – he would get no new coding beyond that which he already had. Because of this, the researcher contends that there is internal validity, either there are consistent themes coming through or there is a conspiracy by all the interviewees to get their story together! There is commonality between aspects of the literature review and the findings, and very few contradictions, and it is of note that, through the analysis of the findings, there are a number of factors that have come to light that have not been seen anywhere else in the literature.

6:11 Final conclusions and reflections

The researcher has found this study personally enlightening and professionally informative. Enlightening in that, at the outset, he had no idea how little the research community knows about leadership in the independent sector, about middle leadership, or about the transitional period leaders go through on first being appointed. Informative in that, through academic research, he can recommend with confidence *why* middle leadership is important, *what* should be included in a programme of middle leadership development, and *how* such a programme may be successfully delivered. It is clear from both the review of the literature and the findings of the interview schedule that middle leadership is important in schools because this is the group of people who translate senior leadership

vision into quality learning in the classroom, drama studio or sports field. It is also clear that it is a difficult task; the middle leaders have little positional power, yet need to influence those below, those to the side, and those above in the organisation. In the researcher's case, they are given little if any formal induction or training, little time for their role, yet are called to account each year on the basis of (in the case of academic subject leads) the public exam results. This illumination of the role that they have brings clarity, and with clarity comes a better understanding of where effort and resources may best be focused in order to support transitional middle leaders in their development. For the researcher, being able to separate out challenging factors and enabling factors was the key moment in the study. He makes no claim for generalisability of the specific challenges and enablers that he has identified, and accepts that middle leader in different contexts may see things differently, however he contends that any school middle leader reading this dissertation will find aspects of the findings that resonate, and that effort spent on developing the factors that they can change will be of more use than any wasted effort expended on factors that cannot be changed.

For the researcher, this study has revealed further seams of potential research to be explored. Firstly, there is the question of how unique the findings are to the case within which the study is set. Do the findings resonate with middle leaders in maintained schools? Are they applicable to teachers in primary schools? The research has been confined to a single sex, selective, independent school, and there are advantages in this in that it has allowed for a narrow but deep study into an environment where such research has been hitherto lacking. Following from this, an interesting question arises around the 'complex matrix' or 'web' in which a leader in one context may be a follower in another. This was observed by Busher and Harris (2000), and also identified within the interviews. It is clearly a factor of significance within the case, although one that does not appear to cause issues – staff interviewed appeared to be able to move from 'Chief' to 'Indian' and back again seamlessly depending on the role they are playing at any time. It would be interesting to know a little more about this in the wider field; the researcher is curious as to whether this is less pronounced in the maintained sector for reasons such as the size of the organisation and the lesser emphasis on extra-curricular activities. On the other hand, he would like to know whether it is a bigger factor in primary schools where the operation is smaller, the demarcation of staff roles is less pronounced, and staff roll their sleeves up in order to

overcome issues. The 'complex matrix' is clearly a significant factor in middle leadership in schools, and the researcher would argue that the research community should know more about it in order to inform the leadership development community. A third area that would benefit from further research is that of the evaluation of leadership development programmes. The researcher is struck by the fact that he can, with confidence, recommend the programme of middle leadership induction and development outlined above, however he has no tools that have been developed through academic research that will ascertain the degree of success of the programme. In essence, what does success look like, and how do we measure it?

The researcher has found this study to be a thoroughly engaging, stimulating and enjoyable experience which, as an experienced practitioner, has brought significant clarity to an area of his work that is of genuine interest to him. He has shown that the quality of the learning that takes place within the school is directly influenced by the level of competency of its middle leadership. It is therefore incumbent on the organisation to ensure that its middle leaders are properly prepared for their role, and through the identification of those factors which challenge and those which enable, combined with examples of good leadership development practice from around the world, the researcher has been able to produce a model of middle leadership induction. Whilst no claim for generalisability is made, it is hoped that the findings and subsequent model will resonate with those involved in leadership and its development in other areas, and that they will be able to draw from it to inform their own contexts. In undertaking this study, the researcher has provided an empirically based answer to an original research question.

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Participant Consent Form

Title of Study: Effective support mechanisms for those in the formative stages of middle leadership: a case study in the secondary independent education sector.

Name of Researcher: Paul Irvine BEd (Hons) MA

Name of Participant: ………………………………………

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information provided for the above study. I have had the time to consider the proposal, ask questions, and have these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason, and that this will not affect my legal rights.

3. I understand that any personal information collected during the study will be anonymised and remain confidential.

4. I understand that I will be provided with draft versions of excerpts of the study that refer to my information, and that I will have the right to withdraw or amend this information.

5. I agree to participate in a formal one to one interview with Paul Irvine

6. I understand that the interview will be recorded using an audio digital device.

7. I understand that parts of our conversation may be used verbatim in future publications or presentations, but that any such quotes will be anonymised.

Participant …………………	Date ……………………	Signed …………………..
Paul Irvine (Researcher)	Date ……………………	Signed …………………..

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Paul Irvine

Interview schedule 1: Senior Leaders

Name of respondent	
Date	

The researcher is undertaking a study into support given to middle leaders as part of a PhD at LJMU. The study will generate data through a series of interviews with both senior leaders and middle leaders within the school, looking to develop an induction course for those new to roles such as head of department, head of year or head of an extra-curricular activity.

It is the researcher's wish to tape the interview and subsequently transcribe it, you are welcome to a copy of the transcription if you wish. Please be aware that, whilst anything you say will remain anonymous within the text, because the study is small, and taking place within one school, it may be possible for people both within and without the establishment to deduce the originator.

Propositions	Potential questions
Proposition I Middle leadership is important to the school	• What do you understand by the term 'middle leader? • Who would you consider your middle leaders to be? • What, generically, do you expect them to do? • How much autonomy do you give them? • As an organisation, do you think our middle leadership fulfils its potential? • Can the school achieve more through them, and if so, how?
Proposition II There are specific capabilities that are needed by middle leaders	• What are the qualities you look for when you appoint a middle leader? • To what extent, generally, do candidates exhibit these qualities? • To what extent do you think these various qualities are 'fixed' or 'variable'?
Proposition IV A programme of support for leaders in their formative period has the potential to bridge some of the 'capabilities gap'	• As a school, how much support is given to the middle leaders, both in preparation for the role, and during the first two years in post? • Could the school do more (should more be done) and if so, how do you think this could be achieved?
Proposition V Such a programme has the potential to be of benefit to the individual, the sub unit and the whole school	• Do you see middle school appointments as part of a longer career path either within the school or beyond?

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Paul Irvine

Interview schedule 2: Middle Leaders

Name of respondent	
Date	

The researcher is undertaking a study into support given to middle leaders as part of a PhD at LJMU. The study will generate data through a series of interviews with both senior leaders and middle leaders within the school, looking to develop an induction course for those new to roles such as head of department, head of year or head of an extra-curricular activity.

It is the researcher's wish to tape the interview and subsequently transcribe it, you are welcome to a copy of the transcription if you wish. Please be aware that, whilst anything you say will remain anonymous within the text, because the study is small, and taking place within one school, it may be possible for people both within and without the establishment to deduce the originator.

Propositions	Potential questions
Proposition I Middle leadership is important to the school	• What is your job title? • How long have you been in post? • How would you define your role? • What attracted you to the role? • What prior experience did you have before taking on the role? • Do you see yourself as being a leader? • What aspects of leadership do you think you bring to the role?
Proposition III The capabilities required for leadership are not necessarily the same as those needed by the classroom teacher	• What do you find are the biggest challenges? When you first took on the role? Subsequently? • Do you see good leadership on others? What aspects stand out? • Did anything or anyone prepare you for the role?
Proposition IV A programme of support for leaders in their formative period has the potential to bridge some of the 'capabilities gap'	• Have you gone to anyone for support since taking on the role, and if so who? And what did you gain from them?

	• Is there any information, knowledge or skill that would have been useful to you in preparation for the role?
	• Is there anything that would have been useful to support you during the initial period (first year) of your incumbency?
	• Can you suggest anything that would support you at the present time?
Proposition V Such a programme has the potential to be of benefit to the individual, the sub unit and the whole school	• Do you see your current role as being part of a longer career path?
	• If so, can you give me an indication of your future aspirations?
	• In what ways do you think you could be supported to achieve these aims?

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Interview Transcript

Dear……..

Thank you for giving your time to assist my study into middle leader development, your contribution will be most helpful. In accordance with University regulations, I am returning a transcription of the interview for you to check. If there is anything that you would like me to remove from the transcription, could you please let me know. Once you are happy with the document, I will erase the voice recording and keep any hard copies safely, again in accordance with University regulations. As you can see, the raw document is largely anonymised, although it could be possible to deduce the originator from some of your responses. Should any part of the interview be quoted in the final thesis, or submitted for publication, then I will ensure that it is completely anonymised, and seek your permission before use.

Thank you again for your support in this piece of research

Paul Irvine

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

I give my permission for the data contained within the interview transcript of …….

To be used by Paul Irvine in accordance with the regulations laid down by LJMU.

I have indicated any passages that I do not wish to be used.

Signed…………………………………………… Date……………………………

Interview with Participant 1 (Senior Leader)

17ᵗʰ May 2013

RAW

Interviewer: What do you understand by middle leaders in the school context?

Participant 1: Apart from the fact as an English teacher it's something of an oxymoron, how can one lead from the middle, it's being increasingly used in maintained schools. We were interviewing the other day for the head of (subject) position and two of the candidates referred to themselves as currently occupying middle leadership roles, and I think that they saw the transfer to head of (subject) as something more senior than that, so it is quite interesting to see how other people perceive middle leadership. In actual practical terms, what it is here involves the roles of head of department, head of year, and perhaps some of the heads of major extra-curricular activities so those are some of the constituent parts of the role of middle leadership but the term does give a kind of contradiction which suggests on the one hand that they very much need to be at the behest of our requests of what they need to do - from the middle, on the other hand, we're asking them to do an awful lot. I'm conscious of the fact that the job specification of heads of department, which is what I should know most about, given that it's my domain, are not as all-encompassing as they might be, in fact they only give you a cross section of some of those thing that they might be asked to do. (At this point, some downloaded documentation of middle leader expectations were passed to the researcher.) and I don't think our job specs necessarily give that true reflection.

Researcher: Your understanding of middle leadership, and the school's understanding of middle leadership, do you think there's a bit of a gap there?

Participant 1: No, I think on the whole, we have to very much take an independent schools' approach to this, and from the independent schools I have worked in, and I have worked in four others, middle leadership a) isn't a term we use very often but b) is taken for granted somewhat. So when you become a head of department, the assumption is that you just pick up the baton and you run with it, very little is done in independent schools generally to develop, nurture, prepare, for the role of middle leadership, and I think the qualities we are looking for when we appoint middle leaders tend to be about passion for the subject,

and a number of interpersonal skills; the ability to build collaborative links with other people in the department. We don't actually look for a skills set beyond that, and I don't think we are alone as an independent school in that respect. There is almost a belief that through a process of osmosis, we can become good heads of departments or heads of year and, in the vast majority of cases, that happens. I can honestly say that in my time here, I have been involved with several new people to heads of department roles and they have actually hit the ground running pretty well. You could argue that's because of the way we do things rather informally, you could say it's in spite of that, and that's probably the way your research is going to go, to establish exactly how far our rather laissez-faire approach to the development of middle leadership is a help or a hindrance.

Researcher: So from your perspective, do you think that there is any mileage in giving newly appointed heads of departments, pastoral heads, support and guidance?

Participant 1: Yes, I would hope we give them support and guidance, but what we don't do is formalise it, so at the moment there is no formal induction for middle leaders in this school, there is no formal programme that runs in the way that the programme for NQTs runs; on occasions we will send people out to courses that are run externally, but actually, my concern about this burgeoning industry external leadership provision is that some of these courses are not worth the paper they are written on. So, we do offer that support and guidance, but I'm conscious of the fact there are other areas that perhaps we don't do. What I don't do is sit down with their job spec and work through and say 'OK, which areas are you comfortable with'. We will do that from time to time in appraisal, but we won't do it separate or discretely from that. Again, I would argue that we are probably in the same vein as a lot of the other independent schools. I know there are one or two where heads of department will meet weekly, individually, with the deputy head. I think that's overkill. One thing I think a middle leader has to be able to do is run their own department, for me that is really crucial. If we get to a point where we have to intervene, then - I still can't tell a HoD, Chemistry, Art, Music, how to run their department in terms of subject specialism, particularly in terms of allocating resources. I can advise, I can help, sometimes I can cajole, but I'm not in the business of telling someone how to run a department. So I think the answer to your question is we need a little more in place, but I don't want to overkill this. And I want HoDs to form networks, particularly pairing up with other HoDs. And that

happens here, it happens without it necessarily being a formal process, but there is a kind of unofficial mentoring system that seems to work very well.

Researcher: How would you see going from nothing at one end of a continuum to a very formal structure at the other end of a continuum; how would you, ideally, see MTS moving forward?

Participant 1: Well, I suppose if you had that sliding scale, we are about 20% along the line, I think we need to be about 30% along the scale. Obviously, OFSTED requires a certain amount of documentation, ISI doesn't, and that's a trigger to a degree. The national Standards, for example, in middle leadership, we don't apply in the same way. Now you would argue that HoDs are doing all of those things and more, but what we don't have is a systematic way to document it and to evidence it, and I'm not averse to the idea of going a little further down that route, partly if only if it allows for a degree of self-analysis, so they can identify where their weaknesses are. It's very difficult when you are in the midst of running a big department of fifteen people, it is difficult to stand back and reflect on what you are weakest at, you tend to play to your strengths, so that little bit of time for reflection would be more than just a paper exercise. So that's where I would like us to go, and I think we will get there. I would also like a little more induction for new HoDs and heads of year. I think we have a responsibility just to give them a little time to go and talk more formally and speak to HoDs here, and also their peers in HMC North West, just that little bit of breathing space. One problem is that you would expect your HoD to be the dominant practitioner within the department, so they may well still be teaching up to thirty periods per week, and in some cases they will insist in teaching up to thirty periods per week, and you can't take it off them, and that becomes some sort of problematic thing, to try to get them to scale back a little bit in order to improve the quality of their man management; interpersonal skills.

Researcher: So, when you are on the interviewing team for a HoD or head of a pastoral team, what sort of qualities are you looking for?

Participant 1: From my point of view, we all have our separate sets of questions, and so the headmaster's questions would focus more on the holistic thing of why have they applied for the job, what point in their career do they think they have reached. Mine would focus on two areas: One area would be looking at an understanding of the institution itself, so something about boy friendly learning, an understanding of the independent sector, an

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understanding of selective education. Similar to the questions asked of a classroom teacher, except that you would expect a quality of response that is stronger, deeper, that's been actually informed by what they have been teaching, and their experience to date. The other area we are looking at is interpersonal skills, we are looking at the ability to be able to build bridges with colleagues, with teams, and to actually strengthen the department through consensus. And mostly that is the approach that is taken; very rarely in my experience have we said we are looking for someone to come into a department to kick arse, in which case we are looking for a different agenda, but actually what we tend to find is, these are departments that don't need a radical fix, they are departments that need a careful awareness of the other members of the department. Maybe we are straying a bit much onto real territory here is that the reason we didn't appoint the other day, was to some extent (and this might be controversial, but I'm going to say it), governed by the fact we had a reasonably young female candidate who I thought did pretty well, and we were questioning her ability to take on and lead, an experienced department, two of whom are ex heads of department, and one of whom is head of year, now I was uncomfortable to some extent with that process. For me, if she's got through the interview and she's impressed, she's got through the rest, and she's impressed, she's been acting head of department where she is, then take a punt. That's one aspect of it, another aspect is that one of the reasons we didn't select her was because she doesn't offer sport, and so factoring in to that whole issue (of extra-curricular contribution), the ability as a middle leader has nothing to do with being head of department at all. And that has to be a factor in an all-male environment, boys as well as staff in this case. So, in a way, the criteria I was using aren't necessarily the criteria used to select from in the end. I was talking very much about the way she focussed on the specifics she was asked (by the current head of department) about her subject, and there was depth and resonances of responses that suggested to me that she has started to do some of this stuff already, and therefore she has the potential to develop field trips, ICT, and for me I was won over by it. But as someone who would be in charge of a department, those are good, strong qualities that you are looking for. Whether she can run a team is lower down my pecking order, in the head's mind, it's a more significant issue, and I can see why. So a combination really of an understanding of the institution, or at least a recognition of the institution, an understanding of the importance of being a dominant figure in the subject, showing

passion and enthusiasm, but also an understanding of how to play people. Those are the three areas I think important.

Researcher: When we point internally, do we tell people those are the things we are looking for?

Participant: Some internal appointments in my time have not been interviewed at all…? For want of a better word, and I wasn't privileged to be in the conversations about appointment P, before he took up the job, but I would suspect it would have been along the lines of – it's a strong department in a school that prides itself on its capacity to teach science well, to a high academic level; he had learned under (previous HoD) and he had been at the school for a number of years and proven himself in that respect: 'I'll just take up the mantle' That's what he did. My involvement with P since becoming HoD has been based mainly about assessment, what he wanted to do was change the assessment focus within the department, so I helped him do that, but predominantly, he just got on with it. But I think that's happened almost, it's not because he has been directed in a certain way by discussion with headmaster, I think it's because he understood intuitively, what that department needed at that moment in time. If you look at another example, look at S. She inherited a much more turbulent department in the terms of a part time situation, and staffing changeovers when she came in, and my job with her has pretty much been to reassure her that her leadership is going to get the respect it deserves by right of her position. Occasionally, I have had to intervene with one colleague within the department, and to talk to him privately about the fact that S needs more support and help. When we recruited, I was very happy for her to make the call about who she recruited from outside. For me it was about having a second in department who was full time who she could work with.

Researcher: That's an interesting point because in the skills section of leadership the thing that gives one the power is two things, one hand it's your ability to influence other people and on the other is the authority that is vested into you by the organisation so you have gone to a head of department to underpin that authority to say 'This is your role, I want you to carry it out.'

Participant: Yes, absolutely, I think it very important that as a deputy head (academic), I am seen to support heads of departments as much as I can. There are occasions where HoDs get it wrong, in which case, that's a more difficult conversation to have. For instance, let's

imagine a situation where a HoD decides to top load their own teaching at A level, to the detriment of other members of the department, so I have to have that conversation with them, they may turn around to me and say, well hang on, here I am the lead practitioner here, the dominant teacher in the department, I'm held accountable for the results at GCSE and A level. Now at that point, I've got to make a judgement call; what's beneficial to the department collectively, it's that arrangement, or it's taking some of the pressure off those who are teaching thirty two periods, but for the most part I want to ….. one of the things about schools like these we avoid confrontation, we try to do things by consensus as much as we can, and I'm kind of the middle man sometimes between the head of department who is frustrated, and the subject teacher in their department and I talk to them about those frustrations. I find that conduit difficult, because there are two sides to every story. But very often those are not pedagogical issues, they are personality issues. One person's definition in a department as to what constitutes hard work may not be somebody else's, so a head of department may be monofaceted about, say, Chemistry, and that every bit of work for the school that is not chemistry isn't hard work at all, but in fact others are all-rounders, the school is a community, and their contribution to it is partly teaching chemistry or whatever, and it's running teams or doing other activities, or it's being a year group head. So I've got to try to mediate between those factions. But as far as possible, I will try to back a head of department, and mostly they've been quite reasonable about it

Interviewer: Do you think you get the qualities you want when you appoint middle leaders?

Participant 1: That's a very difficult question to answer; in the same way that, at interview, you can never be sure what you are going to get there is always some doubt, to some degree internally, we've know a little more about what we're going to get. Coming up here, what I've found is that you often get, in the South, very ambitious, late twenties, early thirties people who want to see middle leadership absolutely as a step to something further, they want to become heads or deputy head or they want to be influential in some other sphere, and they will do four years, five years, and then they will get out, and you can see that type, and sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. Here, it's less predictable what people's career path might take. Partly because potentially some people won't be leaving here at all, and partly because in a way, it's a smallish school with very limited progression opportunities, So, essentially, those who come from outside, equally, we tend to attract less from the national field than perhaps I would like. So if you really want, let's

take the example of J, who is never going to be here long, never going to form an emotional attachment with the school, but is headstrong in his desire to turn the department into what he wants it to be, not just because he wants to move on, but also because he wants to start with a clean slate. Very few people who start middle positions here, start with that clean slate, most of them build with what there is, rather than to dismantle and start again. To some extent, J … start again. I can't think… G, and that's because he inherited a changing department, and a department that hadn't actually produced for very long…who… force of will and character I suppose, But what we don't have too many of here, is people in place who are going to be in post for four years, and then, off they go somewhere else for more senior positions, I could be wrong, but that means in turn, we could have HoDs who are in post for ten, fifteen years, maybe longer

Researcher: If we were going to do any development programme, we would want to do one that was subtly different to one where we were getting constant churn, because actually we are investing in people who are potentially going to be with us for a long time.

Participant 1: Potentially yes. The issue is, and this is a real issue for middle leaders, how do you keep fresh, how do you keep innovative and that's the thing I've yet to crack. Most people who have been in post for that sort of length of time, start to get a bit frayed around the edges in terms of what they do. They either tend to be recursive, and just do the same thing every year because that's how it's always been, or they tend to cherry pick a little bit and do the things they want to do, rather than the things that need to be done, so that's playing to your strengths again. So for example in the English department, they may be very good at literature, and languages may be forgotten about, and yet it's an important factor in terms of GCSE results. So any development plan needs to find ways of refreshing your own approach to work, as much as making you more skilful at what you do; it's about sustaining that freshness, and it's difficult. Some argue that HoDs should be on a cycle, of five years, drop back and let someone else have a go, and there are one or two schools that do that. (interruption) It's the long term middle leaders. And I think it's almost in that phrasing, the way it's used in schools, as the definition implies, you aren't going to stay there very long, but that's not true in the independent sector at all.

Researcher: And in your experience of the northern circuit of independent schools, do you think that's reasonably common?

Participant 1: Oh yes, we're not alone there. Partly because there's not a big pool of schools to move to, and partly because, actually in a parochial context, everybody thinks they're the best at what they do, so I'm sure that Bolton School are saying similar things to us about their practice, King's Chester are saying similar things about their practice, and so really what we get is a slightly more regionalised approach to everything. The fact is, if people live in an area, and are happy in an area, they don't want to be uprooting their kids, they want to put their kids through the school, all those things are factors that are playing on their minds. As much, as career progression and development.

Researcher: To what extent, do you think, the qualities of middle leaders are actually 'extendable'.

Participant 1: Well, this is again the sixty four thousand dollar question. How do you know if someone has got what it takes to move from middle leadership to senior leadership? How on earth do you know? And the answer is you don't. You have to go through a process, which is slightly more rigorous in terms of offering a presentation or in tray exercise, which we don't do for heads of department or heads of year, so you're taking a punt effectively. But it will be very interesting to see if the current middle leaders here will make it onto senior management at the next rotation when people leave. It's no secret that D won't be around for ever, and I won't be around for ever, I suspect, so it will be interesting to see partly whether (and it will be the head's decision), whether he perceives they have got that 'something' that is transferrable or whether he wants to go outside, to be frank, it's not rocket science, common sense dictates that what you need more than anything to move from HoD to a senior position is a willingness to take on board all sorts of information you're not comfortable with, and that you don't understand, outside your subject area, so I guess a little bit of humility is not a bad thing to have. But the other thing you need, is you need to be quite robust, in terms of your attitude and your work rate. You can't have a sit off, it doesn't go away, and I'm a great believer in making yourself available and visible, at HoD level, you don't have to do that. But there's no question in my mind that there are three or four HoDs here who spring to mind who have got those qualities. It's also a question of whether they want to extend themselves.

Researcher: Do you think those qualities that they have can be enhanced further?

Participant 1: Yeah, there's no question. But how do we do that is the issue, and the only way to do that is to expose them to a wide range of different experiences, both here and

elsewhere. So I would suggest that if someone wanted to be a deputy head, and they wanted advice, I would say come and shadow me, walk around with me for a day. That's the best way of seeing what it's like. All the courses in the world aren't going to help, I never went on a 'How to be a deputy head course', anyway it's as broad as it is long, each school has its own issues. But I think it's that ability to be saying we are giving you the chance to dip your toe in the water. I'm a great believer in secondments to other schools; I know it's an expensive thing, but to give people opportunities just to see what else is out there, also it makes them a little less parochial, because the other issue as well, is not so much how many want to make it here as senior leaders, but how many want to go elsewhere to do it? And I do think, I really do believe that having worked in the South, and having come to the North, it's been a real benefit for me, really helpful, and I would just urge anyone to get out there to broaden their repertoire. It might be a bit of a risk in some cases, but it makes you better equipped for the next phase.

Coding master

	Theme		Sub theme
1	Context	1:1	Independent education – 'The package'
		1:2	The importance of educational leadership (so what?)
		1:3	Local career implications
2	Defining middle leadership	2:1	Distributing the leadership
		2:2	What do middle leaders do?
		2:2	Who are the middle leaders
		2:4	Power (authority and influence)
		2:5	Accountability
		2:6	Autonomy
3	Issues around middle leadership	3:1	Time
		3:2	People
		3:3	Pupils
		3:4	The web ('Complex web of leadership')
		3:5	Culture
		3:6	Divided loyalty
		3:7	Communication
		3:8	Organisational structure
4	Capabilities are specific, and different to teaching	4:1	Job descriptions
		4:2	The learning curve
		4:3	Knowledge, perspectives and traits
		4:4	Desirable qualities
		4:5	Viva la difference
		4:6	The context
		4:7	Learning on the job

		4:8	Tapping into experience of others
		4:9	Wider experience
		4:10	Transferability of skills
5	A programme could bridge the capability gap	5:1	Our current provision is laissez faire
		5:2	Leadership capabilities can be developed
		5:3	A more formal programme would be advantageous
6	Programme design parameters	6:1	A moral imperative?
		6:2	Overarching factors
		6:3	Approach
		6:4	Benchmarking
		6:5	You (the leader)
		6:6	Leadership style
		6:7	Vision
		6:8	The team (followers)
		6:9	Environment
		6:10	Generic v bespoke
		6:11	Networking
		6:12	Coaching and mentoring
		6:13	Courses /away days
		6:14	Self-reflection
		6:11	Evaluation of programme
7	Potential benefits	7:1	The individual
		7:2	The organisation
		7:3	The learner
8	Refuting the proposition	8:1	
	Total	**49**	

Theme 4 – Capabilities are specific, and different to teaching

Ser	Data	Location	Notes
4:1	**Job descriptions**		
4:1:1	I don't think I've ever had a job description. If I've got one, I don't remember where I've stored it.	P7 (p1)	
4:1:2	Yes, there was a job description on line that was written by someone who was affiliated to the school; I can't remember what was in that job description… I've completely moulded the job into what I think the job is, and what I think needs to be done, in order to execute this, and this, and this.	P8 (p6)	
4:1:3	Job descriptions don't necessarily give a true reflection (of the role undertaken)	P1 (p1)	Job descriptions could impact on the authority given to the role by the organisation.
4:1:4	There is no such thing as a job description. I have a job description, and you wouldn't believe the stuff that I have to do that falls outside that job description, I think that's the nature of an independent school… perhaps we ought to define it, but actually things happen even though I have been here thirty five years, that you would never believe would happen, and by gum they do happen, so it's very hard to put a job description on somebody that deals with pastoral issues	P2 (p3)	Link to independence: Theme 1 Context
4:1:5	Some of the things that would crop up in a job, you just wouldn't ever be able to predict	P8 (p6)	
4:1:6	The biggest challenge was actually knowing what the role was	P6 (p3)	
4:1:7	…the whole nature of the job is vaguely amorphous, it has not been defined in any way, shape or form to me….What it should be or not, I don't know	P9 (p1)	
4:9	**Wider experience**		
4:9:1	And just from my own experience really	P4 (p3)	Proposition: Wider experience is helpful to draw on
4:9:2	*What aspects of leadership do you bring to the role you've got?* Personal standards, experience, been there, done it	P11 (p3)	
4:9:3	*So would you say that you've got a rich seam of experience that you can draw on?* Undoubtedly	P10 (p4)	
4:9:4	Yes. Because I'd seen it being done. I'd operated in the organisation from zero to ten (years), I've been in the organisation for thirteen years, and I started of as a guide, setting up on a Thursday night, and ended	P10 (p9)	

	up section head, then onto contingent commander, so I've been through all of the stages, so there is nothing that is entirely new to me		
4:9:5	I've done lots of sports coaching; before I went into teaching, I played football and I coached at quite a high level, so I managed young men, adults, I was coaching when I was thirty, coaching footballers, so I think that dealing with people, and knowing how to deal with people, knowing discipline issues, knowing how to – my life before teaching has helped me a great deal	P4 (p8)	Experience of managing people Proposition: Wider experience is helpful to draw on
4:9:6	Well, to a certain extent, how to manage. In past lives I have managed teams of peripatetics, other part time staff, and I have undertaken management training in those areas. The difference is that, in those organisations, there is a very clear management structure. But what I've taken from there is this need for communication and collaboration, and this need not to just stand up and make decisions, and everyone else has to like it or lump it. So, that sense of collective responsibility	P9 (p10)	
4:9:7	Yes, life experience, I mean, I didn't start teaching until I was thirty five. So I had a life before teaching, and all that experience. I've had to speak in front of people, I've had to take sessions, I've had to deal with people, disappoint people, appraise people, and all that has helped enormously	P4 (p8)	Rich experience prior to teaching Proposition: Wider experience is helpful to draw on
4:9:8	Yes I think so, directly and indirectly. I've always had an interest in history; I use that a lot actually, probably more than I ought to. For example, if I meet somebody from the Army, I always have something to say to them. I'll always have some reference point because I'm quite well informed about events that are happening now and in the past, I have quite a lot of intellectual reference points, historical reference points, and that is very useful	P10 (p4)	
4:9:9	I'm involved in sport, and that helps you form good relationships with staff	P5 (p3)	Proposition: Wider experience is helpful to draw on
4:9:10	*Do you think it's possible to learn much about that before you take a role on?* Yeah, it's called living a life. And getting mucky	P8 (p11)	
4:9:11	What you are is very much what your experiences have been, over a long time	P6 (p10)	Proposition: Wider experience is desirable
4:9:12	I think I understand leadership as a whole, because of my background in various things	P6 (p2)	Proposition: Wider experience is desirable
4:9:13	I would say come and shadow me, walk around with me for a day. That's the best way of seeing what it's like. All the courses in the world aren't going to help.	P1 (9)	Proposition: Wider experience is desirable

4:9:14	…. we were fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, he would start coaching them, and introduce us to coaching these students, and you would pick up the skills without realising, it was almost like an unconscious process, and he would do it himself, he would coach them, and then we would take over, and we would repeat what he said, and we'd try it out on a new student, and that was the first time that I started taking a team roll, sort of leadership role, and because I had done the sport for a good number of years, and was experienced in it, it opened the door for me to understand the technical side, practice a little bit of the coaching side, communicating 'this is what you need to do to get this' to various personality types, and then I was lucky enough to find a job in Australia, and America as an assistant coach, in a different culture, teaching, the same skill but to different cultures … three jobs in total, one of which was a head coach role. And from those roles, I started to develop leadership skills, learning about personalities, character skills, motivation, how to work with people and around people to get a particular job done and the politics involved	P8 (p2)	
	So you draw from your wider experience for the role? Yes	P6 (p5)	Proposition: Wider experience is desirable
4:9:15	I'm a great believer in secondments to other schools. It makes them a little less parochial	P1 (9)	Proposition: Wider experience is desirable