

Direction (Re)forming: Teachers' Accounts of Leadership Processes in Secondary School Subject Departments

Shalini Saxena

School of Education

Auckland University of Technology

2019

Submitted in partial fulfilment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Educational Leadership at the

Auckland University of Technology

*The task of leadership is not to put greatness into humanity, but to elicit it,
for the greatness is already there.*

John Buchan,
historian and political leader

Abstract

This small-scale, qualitative study focuses on the processes of direction forming in subject departments with the aim to extend understandings of these processes. The research questions guiding the study are: What are teachers' understandings of how direction forms and reforms within their subject department? How do teachers associate direction forming and reforming with key departmental leadership functions? What strategies do teachers use to address challenges with departmental direction forming? An interpretivist ontological viewpoint underpins the methodology for this study.

The main findings of this study are: (1) Group processes of direction forming in subject departments do not replace hierarchies. (2) Subject departments are seen as compliant units within organisations. (3) Most leadership processes are aimed at achieving compliance and are usually responsive, rather than proactive. (4) There is some recognition of collective agency, but almost none of individual agency.

The interplay of structural components and interpersonal relationships seems to guide direction forming in subject departments. Organisational structures, including leadership structures, do not always align with departmental needs. Teachers' accounts suggest that their team's performance depends on the quality of working relationships amongst themselves, and organisational structures may make it harder to sustain these relationships. These findings could be applied to a critical review of current leadership structures in New Zealand secondary schools to explore emergent leadership as a form of leadership. The findings may also contribute to existing literature on leadership processes by adding teachers' perspectives to it. It is recommended that teacher and middle leader voice be gathered and used to inform organisational planning for increased alignment between policy and requirements.

Table of contents

Abstract.....	ii
Table of contents	iii
Attestation of authorship.....	v
Acknowledgements	vi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Personal professional experience of direction forming	1
Leadership studies: a backdrop for educational leadership	4
Rationale and design of the study	7
Research context.....	9
Structure of thesis	11
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	14
Literature review methodology.....	14
Leadership: expectations, constructs, structures, role of context.....	15
Group processes of leadership	21
Role of interactions in forming direction.....	25
Professional dialogue and collaboration for problem-solving	27
Direction forming in New Zealand secondary schools.....	29
Teacher agency	31
Summary	33
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS	34
Theoretical orientation and conceptual framework	34
Enlisting participants	37
Ethical considerations	39
Semi-structured interviews	42
Analysing data	44
Summary	45
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS.....	46
Introducing participants	46
Interview outline: Max.....	47
Interview outline: Ann	51
Interview outline: Peta	54
Interview outline: Lyn.....	61
Interview outline: Jess.....	65
Overview of the initial findings	68
Summary	70
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION.....	71
Establishing the analysis framework	71
Spontaneous, professional interactions	71
Leader generated processes.....	74

Role of existing structures in promoting collaboration.....	77
Perceived barriers to direction forming	78
Strategies to overcome perceived barriers	80
Interface of organisational structures and socio-cultural factors	81
Summary	88
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION.....	89
Rationale and aims of research study.....	89
Course of action to address research aims	90
Main findings	91
Strengths and limitations of the study.....	93
Implications for future practice.....	95
Recommendations.....	96
Summary	98
References.....	100
Appendices.....	109
Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet	109
Appendix B: Participant Consent Form	112
Appendix C: Principal Consent Letter.....	116
Appendix D: Invitation to Principal.....	118
Appendix E: Indicative Questions for semi-structured interviews	119
Appendix F: Confidentiality agreement (Transcriber)	120
Appendix G: Organising data	122
Appendix H: Unpacking responses that address research questions	125
Appendix I: Sample colour-coding of interview transcript	130
Appendix J: Checking the trustworthiness of data	132

Tables and Figures

Table 4.1: Summary of Max's key points.....	51
Table 4.2: Summary of Ann's key points.....	54
Table 4.3: Summary of Peta's key points.....	60
Table 4.4: Summary of Lyn's main points	65
Table 4.5: Summary of Jess' main points	68
Figure 4.1 Overview of initial findings.....	69

Attestation of authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of learning.

Date: 27 January, 2019

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the support of the people and organisations that were with me on this journey towards greater understanding: the Principal and the Board of Trustees at Pukekohe High School, TeachNZ (Ministry of Education).

The Principals of the schools who made it possible for me to access their teachers, and the teachers who agreed to participate in this research, thank you.

My research supervisor, Howard Youngs, who was unfailingly patient, and offered encouragement and challenge in equal measure.

My husband, Sunil, for believing in me.

This research was approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) on 04/09/2018 and granted AUTEC Reference number 18/300.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of how this small-scale, qualitative research study was conceived and shaped with the aim of extending understandings of direction forming in secondary school subject departments by employing a social interpretive approach. The development of the rationale for the study is traced before outlining the processes that led to its design framework, including how the research questions were constructed.

Personal professional experience of direction forming

Reflecting on my experiences of secondary school leadership, I was drawn to thinking about phases that stand out most strongly in memory, and question what made them so memorable. The earliest of these memories are of an elitist school in India where over a century of traditions influenced all aspects of school life from the curriculum design to how food was served in the Mess halls. One of the measures of student success was the number of athletes the school contributed to national level teams each year. It was not always easy to deliver a very prescriptive and academic curriculum content against this backdrop, and the positional leader passively supported the maintenance of the status quo. Yet, the department in which I taught delivered above average results, was seen to be making good progress, and contributed to the extra-curricular life of the school. How did this happen? The more I thought about it, the more I recognised the role of the processes that gave direction to the group. I could recall specific events and our responses to them that determined the next step for us as a group; leadership was emergent and in a dynamic state. There were echoes of the pragmatism, trust and accountability that are identified as being important for business growth (Pearce, Manz, & Sims, 2014, p. 187). In the case of my subject department's direction-related decisions, these factors were crucial. We experienced empowerment by expressing confidence in each other (Conger, 1989; Neilsen, 1986), creating opportunities to participate in collective decision-making (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010), and generally maintaining high expectations of each other. Collectively, all these factors improved our experience of the workplace

(Strauss, 1977). The realisation came as quite a surprise because the school was so bound by traditions that it seemed impossible to do anything different. Despite the context, our department formed its own direction effecting positive outcomes for the students.

The underlying assumption of most thinking on leadership and leaders seems to be that of a positive shift or movement of outcomes for all associated. A person is regarded as a leader for making a contribution to the “individual’s group-invested needs” (Gibb, 1958, p. 109). “We assume that, no matter what the problem, leadership is the solution”(Alvesson & Spicer, 2014a, p. 40). This approach seems to disregard the role of active teacher involvement in decision-making, and the suggestion that people find it easier to trust and support solutions that they have constructed themselves (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001), thus increasing their own efficacy.

There is also an undercurrent of resigned acceptance of a romanticised construct of leadership even as the social construction of organisational reality is acknowledged (Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985).The question then becomes about the destination and how decisions are made about the direction in which to travel. In New Zealand secondary schools, the destination or goal is usually informed by policy. For example, schools seek leaders who can improve outcomes for all students, ensure that 85% of school leavers gain NCEA Level 2, and enhance the bicultural aspect of the Treaty of Waitangi. Schools’ strategic plans are another deciding factor. Based on the needs and aspirations of their communities, schools set goals and plan to achieve them within a certain timeframe. However, while the overarching, broad strokes may be put in place, the processes of ongoing direction setting or steering receive little attention in the din of policy, leadership, and goals. Crevani (2018) uses a geographer’s concept of space to add a dimension that makes it possible to “conceptualise direction as the development of an evolving relational configuration” (p.83). While this adds clarity to a mental image of movement in a direction, the concept of space does little to add clarity to the processes that influence the movement.

How do we recognise and understand the production of direction for a subject department? To answer this question, I reflected on my own practice as a secondary school middle leader charged with leading change. The destination for my journey was set by the school Principal, who was being led by the policies set by the Ministry of Education. In retrospect, direction formed mainly through processes of collaboration as well as dissent as we went through all the stages of team development listed by Tuckman (1965): form, storm, norm, perform. We became aware of this only when we paused to consciously and formally reflect at the end of two years. There had been a shift towards clarity of purpose and process that made it possible to engage more strategically in future actions. In addition, by the end of two years, leadership in the form of informal mentoring was emerging from the professional interactions within the group. For instance, lunchroom conversation became increasingly about effective curriculum delivery. Even as some members remained entrenched in previously held beliefs such as deficit thinking about the students' ability to achieve, another group of agentic thinkers began taking shape. The tension between the two sets was becoming a barrier to further meaningful shifts towards shared understandings that would lead to achievement of the department's goals. What took us through this period was positive reinforcements of the shifts already achieved, and being consistent in our messages about the department vision. The ongoing alignment of purpose, process and outcome emanates an influence all its own. It has brought greater clarity to a shared vision, one that reflects the aspirations of the group. Looking back, direction was formed, and then re-formed for the department within this period. Yet, even while the emergence of leadership was clear, there was incomplete understanding of the processes that allowed and supported this to happen. This is the main reason this study focuses on the processes of direction forming in secondary school subject departments.

As the positional leader, I am aware of the interconnected, interdependent, complex entanglement evident in Uhl-Bien, Marion, and McKelvey's (2007) framework for Complexity Leadership Theory. The framework envisions three main leadership functions that are inextricably intertwined: adaptive, administrative and enabling. Sometimes these may work together in harmony, and at others they

create threats to the group and its formal leadership. I also recognise the moral imperative for creating a better world, a better workplace, and improved outcomes for all stakeholders inherent in some educational leadership literature (for example, Branson, 2007; Branson & Gross, 2014; Duignan, 2012; Starratt, 2011). Bearing all this in mind, a study aimed at extending understandings of the processes that occur in the formation of direction for a group would further the conversations about how educational leadership practice unfolds in New Zealand secondary school subject departments.

Leadership studies: a backdrop for educational leadership

It seemed logical to begin this study with a brief examination of the wider field of general leadership studies in which educational leadership is situated. The purpose of this exercise was, idiomatically speaking, to get a lay of the land before drilling into group leadership and direction forming for a group. As I began the search for explanations and definition of the terms, I encountered one of the most arresting statements on the meaning of leadership in an article that recognises and examines the differences in approaches to the term to generate a taxonomy based on the evident dissension. It makes the case that “leadership may actually hold no meaning and *because of this* positively overflows with meaning” (Grint, Jones, & Holt, 2016, pp. 14, italics in original). It also raises some other points that are provocative in the contradictions and paradoxes revealed through identifying five major approaches to leadership:

- Leadership as Person: is it WHO ‘leaders’ are that makes them leaders?
- Leadership as Result: is it WHAT ‘leaders’ achieve that makes them leaders?
- Leadership as Position: is it WHERE ‘leaders’ operate that makes them leaders?
- Leadership as Purpose: is it WHY ‘leaders’ lead that makes them leaders?
- Leadership as Process: is it HOW ‘leaders’ get things done that makes them leaders?

(Grint et al., 2016, p. 4)

For instance, in limiting leadership to a person in an appointed leadership role, the contradictory case of leadership as a collective is also presented with the reminder that “informal opinion leaders” (Grint et al., 2016, p. 5) may not be the positional or appointed leaders, and questions how outcomes of any initiative may be attributed to a single person. Besides, it is noted that the context determines the meaning of leadership for it is “whatever a group of subjects makes of it within the symbolic fabric” (p.16).

Discussing leadership as a talent Gibb (1949) points out that it is not a dimension of personality, as sometimes suggested. Rather, it is “a quality of the role the individual plays within a particular and specified social system” (p.75). This idea is especially relevant to this study focusing on direction forming for subject department groups in Auckland secondary schools. A subject department is a social group with a designated leader and, like most other social groups, its individual members have the capacity to influence certain aspects of its functioning. The quality of the roles within the group may see continual change as people interact and participate, demonstrating individual members’ leadership talent evident at different times. For example, case studies of four Australian primary schools revealed that leadership is not limited to those in formal positions of leadership (Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015); it is enacted through teacher and student activities as well. This finding resonates with my own experience of secondary schools in like manner where I, as a positional leader, find other members of the department influencing the direction forming of aspects that match their own fields of expertise and interest. For instance, a teacher who has recently completed a thesis on how Pākeha teachers can build stronger relationships for learning with Māori (Brien, 2017) led the professional learning for the Kia Eke Panuku initiative¹ across the Department.

Studies also recognise the problem of ambiguity in the concept of leadership to include problems of defining and measuring it (Pfeffer, 1977). This ambiguity also leaves the gate wide open for anything

¹ Kia Eke Panuku: Building on Success was a professional development school reform initiative that operated in 94 secondary schools from Kaitaia to Invercargill in New Zealand from 2013 to 2016.

else to enter and be included in the leadership discourses that have been designed to solicit support (Blom & Alvesson, 2015). Additionally, it has been presented that leadership and management are terms that cannot be interchanged for while the latter suggests application of strategies that have been used before, the former usually calls for novel ideas and strategies and is characterized by change (Barker, 1997; Grint et al., 2016). Some attempts to define leadership through its outcomes, submit that effective leadership makes leaders redundant (Grint et al., 2016; Parry & Bryman, 2006). This would suggest that systems are responsible for the success of leadership; indeed that systems are leadership. Systems thinking is mainly concerned with problem solving such that the system is constantly refined towards its most advantageous form (Phelan, 1999) and matches a scientific and mechanistic way of thinking. Much like an engineer designing an efficient machine, leadership is seen to focus on designing effective systems. While the approach may work well for engineering inanimate objects, leadership cannot ignore the human element of any system. Regarding human interaction as a system would be error of judgement for it ignores the ordinary, everyday freedom and agency of human choices (Stacey, Griffin, & Shaw, 2000). Even within an optimal system, how and when we interact with whom and why is quite impossible to predict and control.

The same line of thought emerges in a study of businesses where it was found that to make any significant gains, leaders had to become a part of the existing processes at work and discover what was happening and how things were taking shape (Regine & Lewin, 2000). These processes in the businesses being studied, depended on the interactions of the agents. Therefore, leaders would have to enter the ongoing interactions and be with the agents at whatever level in an organisational structure they might be, rather than imposing or assigning an expected level. Ordering or controlling from a hierarchical position would have to make way for mutuality for these interactions to be enhanced. Leaders would provide a safe environment within which agents would be free to interact, take risks, and be influenced by each other and outside agents. This seemed to closely resemble the ideal environment needed to foster genuine and meaningful professional inquiries in secondary schools (Zeichner, 2003). Another interesting finding of this study of businesses was the idea that those in

positional authority were leaders “by not leading” (Regine & Lewin, 2000, p. 19) and their capacity to allow and create conditions for positive interactions for growth were what mattered most to making gains. In any other context, particularly in the context of secondary school subject departments, the same interactions would be of paramount importance because it would be through these interactions that new directions would be formed.

Rationale and design of the study

The rationale for this study arose from a consideration of my professional experience, first as a team member and then as positional leader, through the lens of educational leadership studies. These aspects have been described earlier in this chapter. As I engaged with the literature, it began to become more apparent that studies based on a process ontology were not common. It seemed opportune to combine my experience and interest with the possible gap in literature to design a study that would aim to extend understandings of the processes of direction forming.

Through this process ontology, the study was also expected to provide insight into emergent leadership and direction forming as a form of leadership (Avolio, 2007; Barker, 2001; Hibbert, Beech, & Siedlock, 2017). My initial literature review on the topic strongly suggested the duality of leaders and leadership and that qualities of leadership could be developed across the group (Zaccaro, Heinen, & Shuffler, 2009), instead of only in the individual who would also hold the formal designated role. The significant role that teachers have in forming the direction of a subject department (Drew, Priestley, & Michael, 2016) can be brought to fruition through collaboration because it brings coherency to all disparate actions (Timperley, 2014).

While these ideas reveal links and dualities to create a picture of the relationship between leaders, leadership, teachers and direction forming, all this could be a mere illusion of understanding without a deeper study of the processes that occur within groups (Alvesson & Spicer, 2014b; Crevani, 2018; Sheard & Kakabadse, 2004; Youngs, 2017). Besides, ignoring the processes may encourage an approach that is bureaucratic and serve to solidify the idea that leadership is always hierarchical

(Friedrich, Griffith, & Mumford, 2015; Tschannen- Moran, 2009), thus limiting the growth of fresh approaches to leadership studies beyond the leader follower construct that can restrict leadership to hierarchies. The importance given to individual leaders' actions in leadership literature far outweighs the study of leadership practices across groups (Thorpe, Gold, & Lawler, 2011). In order to make a meaningful contribution to understandings about how leadership emerges in groups and to recognise direction setting as a form of leadership, it seemed logical to pursue a study of processes.

Drafting research questions that would address the aim of extending understandings of processes began with considering teachers' current understandings. Discussing this with my research supervisor highlighted the importance of constructing questions in a way that would encourage activation of prior knowledge through giving an account of professional experiences. I also revisited my lecture notes from last year and noticed how there was an emphasis on constructing questions that allowed a study to address the aim without wandering into other areas. This urged me to be very specific as I began drafting the research questions. The first step was to position myself as a learner; how would I go about extending my understanding of a topic. Three main themes emerged from the initial brainstorm on the topic of processes of direction forming in a secondary school subject department: how is direction formed, what is not helpful in this regard, how are departmental functions executed despite barriers. These were refined to the three research questions listed below:

1. What are teachers' understandings of how direction forms and reforms within their subject department?
2. How do teachers associate direction forming and reforming with key departmental leadership functions?
3. What strategies do teachers use to address challenges with departmental direction forming?

A case study approach was considered while designing this research project because it may be more flexible in allowing the research to be as general or as specific as required. Further investigation into the use of this approach revealed the logical need to have varied sources of data collection to support its efficacy. While the findings of the study are based on the cases of five participants, the findings are based on a single source of data; the semi-structured interview. Given the scope and scale of this Masters level thesis, it was not practicable to include other data sources. A qualitative approach aligned better with the interpretivist lens that was selected to make meaning of teachers' accounts of direction forming in subject departments.

While designing this social interpretive study on the accounts of some New Zealand secondary school department members, purposive sampling was considered to be most suitable for its purposes. Exclusions were included in the design to make the selection of participants transparent and straightforward. For example, my own workplace was excluded from participating in the study. Only teachers and positional leaders with more than three years' experience were included in the belief that their accounts would yield rich data. However, since fewer than expected expressions of interest were received from potential participants, a convenience sample was finally used. Answers to the research questions were sought by applying an interpretivist framework to the data gathered through semi-structured interviews with five participants.

Research context

This study focused on the accounts of professional experiences of New Zealand secondary school teachers. A framework of social interpretivism that allows for an examination of the experiences was used in the pursuit of improved understanding. In order to better understand the areas or aspects for which direction is formed in a subject department, a brief description of some common department functions follows.

Curriculum delivery, and associated aspects such as resourcing and student assessment, occupy the most important position among department functions. The *New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007), is a set of expected learning outcomes at different levels. Each learning area is also given sets of key indicators to assess student progress. While a range of teaching and learning resources are available through the Ministry of Education and subject associations, departments are expected to modify them to suit their learners. In the last three years of secondary school, students are assessed against Achievement Standards (AS) and Unit Standards (US) administered by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) through the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) examinations.

One of the most significant functions of a subject department is to prepare students for assessments through which they may gather credits and gain recognised qualifications. NCEA is based on standard-based assessment which means teachers have a great deal of choice in how they choose to assess the students. Internal assessments are widespread and robust systems must be implemented to ensure accuracy of marking. Intra-department and school-wide professional learning sessions are organised to share best practice, give information, and upskill in newer areas such as e-learning. Courses may be designed and modified to suit the needs of students at any stage during the year. This built-in flexibility may also support an ongoing formation and re-formation of direction for the department.

All classroom teachers must have a current practising certificate, obtained by providing evidence of meeting all set criteria (Education Council, 2017a) and renewed every three years, from the Education Council. Evidence is gathered through an appraisal process guided by Education Council documents (Education Council, 2017a, 2017b). While the appraisal outcomes are mandated by the Education Council, the system may be designed by the school. Finally, the processes of implementing the system to achieve the mandated outcomes are left to the department. This includes the manner in which evidence is gathered by individual teachers. Some subject departments may set up intra-department

collaborative learning groups for this purpose, while others may encourage pursuit of individual teaching inquiries.

Besides the largely regulatory functions described above, a department is also expected to implement initiatives that support the accelerated learning for the National Education Policy focus groups: Māori, Pasifika, males. These initiatives, such as Ka Hikitia² and Kia Eke Panuku, come with their own processes and strategies that have to be practiced and embedded in the daily operations of the department. For instance, the Code of Professional Responsibility expects teachers will be “affirming Māori learners as tangata whenua and supporting their educational aspirations” (Education Council, 2017a, p. 10). The school may create a strategic goal to reduce disparity between Māori and non-Māori learners based on this. It then comes to the department to align its direction with that of the Education Council and school goals. The processes by which a department forms direction is the focus of this study.

Structure of thesis

The next chapter, Chapter Two, of the thesis focuses on the literature review completed for this study. It is structured using sub-headings that indicate the main ideas that were considered to be relevant to answering the research questions through a review of professional literature. The chapter begins with an outline of the literature review methodology. The next two sections are based on general leadership studies and comment on areas such as leadership constructs, structures, and group processes of leadership. The chapter then moves into areas of direction forming with a closer examination of the role of professional interactions and collaboration in this respect. The chapter concludes with an overview of direction forming in New Zealand secondary schools.

² Ka Hikitia – Accelerating Success is a strategy to improve how the education system performs to ensure Māori students are enjoying and achieving education success as Māori.

The methodology for this study is explained in Chapter Three, beginning with a description of the social constructivist orientation and interpretivist ontological viewpoint used for the study. This section is immediately followed by descriptions of the research context and the process by which participants were selected for this research. The ethical considerations for this study are described under a separate sub-heading. The last two sections of the chapter include a description of the design of the semi-structured interviews and a brief discussion of the relevance of teacher agency to this study.

Chapter Four is dedicated to introducing the research participants, and summarizing the semi-structured interviews. Key points raised by the participants are presented as a table at the end of each interview summary. The chapter concludes with a figure to present the first set of findings that emerge from the interviews. These findings are analysed and refined in Chapter Five.

The structure of Chapter Five is informed by the main themes that emerged from an analysis of the findings described in Chapter Four. The chapter begins by establishing the analysis framework, detailing the thought processes through tables. The next three sections, indicated by sub-headings, are the main themes that were identified through an analysis of teachers' accounts of how direction is formed in their subject departments: spontaneous professional interactions, leader generated processes, and the role of existing organisational structures in direction forming. The next two sections focus on perceived barriers to direction forming, and the strategies that teachers identified to be in use to overcome these perceived barriers. Finally, the chapter describes the interplay of structural components and interpersonal relationships in leadership processes in secondary school subject departments.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six broadly follow the three-step approach: data-reduction, data-analysis, drawing conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Chapter Four, includes summaries of each semi-structured interview to reflect the data-reduction stage. Data-analysis forms the basis of Chapter Five.

Chapter Six comprises the conclusions drawn from this study, implications of these for leadership education and training, and offers recommendations for areas that may benefit from further research. Besides, the chapter also outlines the perceived strengths and limitations of the study, and how the findings may be of particular relevance to middle leaders in New Zealand secondary schools.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter includes a description of the processes of searching, selecting, analysing, and synthesising professional literature that would help in achieving the aim of this study. It draws on literature from the field of general leadership studies as well as educational leadership studies. Following a description of the review methodology, the chapter is organised under sub-headings that indicate the main themes that emerged from the reviewed literature.

Literature review methodology

To begin a systematic literature review, I revisited the recommended readings from the three post graduate courses I had recently completed in partial fulfilment of a Master of Educational Leadership degree. This was considered a good place to begin because it was familiar, and therefore bolstered my sense of self-efficacy. I developed a list of key words that reflected ideas linked with the research aim. The key words selected for my initial search for relevant literature were: leader, leadership, leading teams, team-centric, secondary school subject departments, emergence of leadership, emergent, leadership development, processes of leadership, direction formation, collective process, collaboration, self-managing team, leader development, and follower. Initially, I was able to maintain a systematic diary of the readings by noting the date, source and main points raised in it. However enriching this exercise may have been, it was too time-consuming to fit within the scope of a Masters level thesis. Therefore, instead of continuing to maintain a detailed diary, I began to keep brief notes about the main points raised in the literature to create a literature summary. Besides, I began to download readings that matched the key search terms directly into my EndNote library. The main drawback of this practice was in the system of exporting citations directly to the library. Quite frequently, details would not be imported in the APA style of referencing and needed to be checked and edited. Following my research supervisor's advice, I began to download the abstracts with the readings. This helped with searching material for a specific aspect of the research aim.

During the phase of engaging with professional literature, besides maintaining a summary record, I made notes on the readings using online tools as well as the more familiar tools of pen and paper. Every week or so, I would line up the annotated readings and look for emerging patterns that could be harnessed to pursue answers to the research questions. Colour coding of the main ideas was very helpful at this stage. Finally, three themes were identified as being most promising in terms of the purpose of this study: a call for a process ontology in educational leadership studies, a shift to self-managing teams, and the role of team-centric environments in facilitating the emergence of leadership.

Another layer was added to the process of engaging with literature and identifying patterns when I began to follow up on the research mentioned in their reference lists. It was a quest that was immensely rewarding and frustrating all at the same time. It was rewarding because of the richness of thought I encountered and frustrating because often it took several search routes to access the document required or there was a wait involved as a book was sourced from another library through the BONUS+ system at Auckland University of Technology. Occasionally, I used the Google search engine to locate scholarly articles using the key words for this study as search terms. Databases such as ERIC and Scopus were accessed through the AUT library page to access publisher's databases.

Some lines of thought were uncovered during discussions with my research supervisor, leading into more readings on linked topics. The selection of material was not limited by when it had been published. Rather it was the relevance and applicability of research that decided whether or not I selected it. Works considered as seminal by some authors in general leadership studies and group processes were valuable in understanding the structures and functions of any given group.

Leadership: expectations, constructs, structures, role of context

The first idea to be explored in professional literature was from general leadership studies because it was considered important to create a general understanding of the term 'leadership' before moving

into educational leadership studies in particular. Inherent in the idea of leadership is that it cannot be a closed system or something that can exist in isolation (Alvesson, 2017). For leadership to come into being warrants having others in various roles: participants, followers, recipients, stimulators, and, enablers to name a few. It would follow that if others are the *raison d'être* of leadership, outcomes for these same 'others' could provide a definition of leadership. Examples to illustrate this could be picked from Hollywood's cinematic contribution to conceptualisations of leadership by creating heroic figures who swoop in to improve outcomes for all (Alvesson, 2017), and leadership that is fueled by a moral purpose and fatalistic beliefs (Grint et al., 2016) as in the case of leaders held up to be legends. Often, leadership is about delivering what others demand, and there is always a possibility that efforts labelled as leadership may lead to unexpected outcomes, or even no outcomes at all. The undiminishing popularity of general leadership studies may well be because leadership can be everything and nothing; "a maddening concept" (Alvesson, 2017, p. 2). The ambiguity that has held scholars enthralled for decades has also prompted some in the community to pause and review existing research on leadership theories to offer implications for future research (Dinh et al., 2014) and recommend the development of more "integrative perspectives" (Dinh et al., 2014, p. 55).

The quest to reach a single objective understanding of leadership has contributed to the reification of the term to become an "it" (Alvesson, 2017, p. 8), a thing or a noun. Besides providing a notion of understanding, it provides middle managers with an aspirational goal (Alvesson & Spicer, 2014a) amid the largely mundane and routine task-based existence. The reification enables people to believe that leaders make advancement happen, and that the advancement is good for all (Gemmill & Oakley, 1992). Paradoxically, the process of reification has also contributed to the "confusion" (Gemmill & Oakley, 1992, p. 114) of scholars about the concept of leadership. There is a real danger of team members losing sight of their own agency in an environment that regards leadership to be an "it" with an individual. Such an approach may even ignore the role of interactions among the group and the context in which they occur. Also, if leadership is a noun, a designated individual may be given its ownership perpetrating the "Hollywoodisation" (Alvesson, 2017, p. 4) of the leader; the hero who

saves the day. Being socially conditioned to regard people such as Gandhi and Mandela as leaders, it is not unusual for us to look out for individuals with the “it” in our own settings.

The notion of wielding influence has surfaced in attempts to provide an explanation of the term *leadership* (Duignan, 2012; Grint, 2010; Kotter, 1988; Larsson & Lundholm, 2013; Yukl, 1989, 2002; Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992) including its darker themes (Calás & Smircich, 1991) in different environments. The same measure of wielding influence may be used to identify leaders in our own educational settings. Studying the sociometry of leadership in temporary groups, Gibb (1950) points out that the nature and strength of the influence of the leader is dependent on the dynamics of the group. Going on to describe leadership as a “dynamic relationship between the leader and his followers” (p.227), he lists “influence hierarchy” (p.227) as the first characteristic of leadership. The idea that as the outlook changes, a leader’s influence may also increase or decrease (Denis, Langley, & Rouleau, 2010) echoes Gibb’s (1950) emphasis on the dynamics of the group. While secondary school subject department groups do not fit the description of a temporary group, their composition often changes. Given that wielding influence has been identified as a part of leadership (Benne & Sheats, 1948; Drath et al., 2008; Parry & Bryman, 2006), it may be fitting to say that in a secondary school subject department influence could be wielded by different people in different situations.

The first person to spring to mind at the mention of the word *leader* will probably be someone in a formal leadership position, or in this age of Instagram and Facebook, someone who has a large number of followers. Within a leader-follower ontology of leadership, influencers are leaders because it is assumed they directly or indirectly set out the path for others to follow. How the path came into being, or where it might lead are important, yet beyond the scope of this 90-point thesis’ aim. What matters in the moment is not limiting focus to the charisma and constructed credibility of the influencer, and the assumption that the person in the formal leadership role at the top of an organisational structure is the reference point for education policy implementation through the organisation.

It would be imprudent to think that there is but one kind of leader. A leader may mean many different things depending on cultural and historical contexts (Blom & Alvesson, 2015). Gardner emphasizes this point by recognising the possible diversity in leaders (Gardner, 1990) and reminds us not to exclude any attributes that may distinguish a person from the rest. As an example, a 1989 search for a school superintendent was finally ended by “subjective and undiscussed assessments” (S. M. Johnson, 1996, p. 94) of the community who decided the appointment. What mattered in the moment was how they perceived a match between what they thought they needed and what they thought they could see. Pfeffer (1977) recognises the tendency of people to attribute outcomes to individuals, ignoring the significance of the wider context, because it gives them a sense of control of the situation. Later, the same individual may end up being judged and evaluated without taking into consideration the setting or the composition of the group ostensibly being led. The same desire to achieve a sense of control also leads to aggrandising and romanticising the individual to be heroic. Ascribing to the romanticised conception of leadership here would demand an acknowledgement of leadership as a double-edged sword for if the leader possesses the power to control, then the blame for negative outcomes will also be the leader’s (Meindl et al., 1985).

The spread of readings also showed the shift in focus and expectations of leadership. Earlier writings, such as Horner’s (1997) review of leadership studies over several decades recognised that most studies focused on individuals as leaders citing Bernard (1926), Blake, Shepard and Mouton (1964), Drath and Palus (1994), Fiedler (1967), and House and Mitchell (1974). Seeking to develop a foundation for leadership training, Barker (1997) noticed that leadership training programmes were being designed with individual traits and behaviours in mind. One of the problems with this approach was that there was no “reasonable agreement on what traits or behaviours are leadership traits or behaviours” (p.343). This leader-centric approach was recognised as being problematic even in the last century with Burns (1978) commenting that the preoccupation with the individual leader meant that very little was being discovered about leadership and Pettigrew (1992) drawing attention to the importance of studying the actual processes in play within and outside the boardrooms of the business

world. This dissatisfaction with the way leadership studies were developing continued into the 21st century with Barker (2001) approaching the subject from the fundamentals, and bemoaning the “outmoded constructs” (p.469) that were still in use. The gaps in leadership development studies remain in the limelight. To illustrate this idea, one study deserves particular attention. Nesbit (2012) identifies “continuous dynamic environments facing organisations” (p.204) as an issue with creating formal leadership-development programmes suggesting that any plans and programmes to develop leaders should be constructed such that they are able to respond to any environmental or contextual change. These studies highlight the connection between context and how leadership is practised. It would be difficult to generate characteristics of leaders or leadership in the absence of specific contexts because it is response to changes in the environment that effects the emergence of leadership.

Further, it is not only the context that impacts the emergence of leadership, but also the popularly held perceptions of leaders. Research to identify male and female perceptions of leaders resulted in a list of seven attributes that added to implicit leadership theories: Sensitivity, Dedication, Tyranny, Charisma, Strength, Masculinity, and Intelligence. (Offermann, Kennedy, & Wirtz, 1994). A paralleling study of Offermann et al.'s (1994) study of the content of implicit leadership theories with new samples over two decades revealed that there has not been a significant shift in how people, both male and female, perceive leaders (Offermann & Coats, 2018). Despite the addition of the attribute of Creativity to the list, the overriding message remained the same: leaders are strong, masculine figures. While this may not be directly addressing my research questions, it is suggested that these perceptions have some bearing on how members recognise emergent leadership in a group.

Houglum's (2012) systematic demystification of some beliefs about leadership refers in particular to Plowman and Duchon's (2007) work on the myths of leadership. One of these is that leaders establish the final outcomes or destination. According to this an individual leader is objective, capable of flawless design and execution of a plan that delivers desired outcomes for all, and is responsible for helping everyone to achieve these desired outcomes. For an individual to be able to successfully

complete all these actions implies a very high degree of control, akin to tyranny, over all aspects of teams. There seems to be little room for anyone else to have any input in the way the plan is designed and implemented. Some other myths of traditional that Plowman and Duchon (2007) write about are also closely linked with the idea of control with negative connotations. It seems that heroic leaders were almost expected to be tyrannical and controlling.

Since ontology is associated with the pivotal beliefs about the nature of reality, an objectivist ontology would regard reality to exist independent of any other factors. There has been some recognition of the trend of associating traditional notions of leadership with objectivist ontology and positivist epistemology (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006), and the shift towards new conceptualisations of leadership employing the framework of subjectivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology. This shift could have been influenced by the increasingly complex and varied demands of educational leadership. It is near impossible for a single individual to be the repository of that highly desirable mass of qualities that will ensure effective leadership. If to be a leader means to be in control of everything all the time, have all the correct answers to the all the questions that need to be asked for the benefit of all, then it does not reflect the topography of the current field of educational leadership. Traditional notions of leadership are seen to be no longer in alignment with leadership challenges (Griffin, 2002; Hougum, 2012; Lichtenstein et al., 2007; Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007). Flatter structures of leadership responsibilities are becoming more common with several individuals, with no formal designation, undertaking leadership actions at different times. Often referred to as a distributed form of leadership, it has gained the attention of educational leadership researchers who seek to reveal its advantages and drawbacks (Bennett, Woods, Wise, & Newton, 2007; Gronn, 2002; Harris, 2003; Woods, Bennett, Harvey, & Wise, 2004).

As an alternative to the objectivist ontology of leadership Drath et al (2008) present an integrative “tripod” approach: direction, alignment, commitment (DAC). It is within these processes that leadership identities may form quite differently from the designated roles. The traditional roles of

leaders and followers may then be interchangeably played out by team members as they participate in leadership processes (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Drath et al., 2008) and begin to be identified as leaders (Alvesson, 2017; Miscenko, Guenter, & Day, 2017). While top-down leadership may still be experienced, leadership may also occur from within and among the group.

If “leadership is a process of influence”(Parry & Bryman, 2006, p. 1), any member of a group may exert that influence. Studies of teams have also shown that team members participate in the leadership process irrespective of their formal designation. This may not be as straightforward as it seems for the contexts for leadership keep changing. Furthering this line of thought, we are urged to pay more attention to the emergence of leadership and its development in specific social contexts (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Denis et al., 2010; Ogawa & Bossert, 2000) while being mindful that these contexts are themselves in a state of constant change. The significance of context is illustrated in conceptualisations where leadership is seen “more like an improvisational dance” (Regine & Lewin, 2000), an ongoing coevolution of systems (McKelvey, 2002), and “micro-interactions that perpetually reconstruct the future” (Stacey et al., 2000, p. 184). Another study based in an industrial setting sees “leaders being constructed through the supervisors’ integration into daily organisational practices” (Virtaharju & Liiri, 2017, p. 2). As the team being studied extended, changed and exchanged their tasks and responsibilities, these “contextual elements” were seen to contribute to “leadership emergence” (p.16). Understanding these ideas better may be assisted by a closer look at some group processes of leadership, since they are all in the context of groups.

Group processes of leadership

Reflecting on the studies on leadership and leaders that were included in the literature review for this thesis, team or group leadership begins to emerge as an intrinsic part of both. Going back to the idea that leadership cannot exist in isolation, some factors that influence a group’s dynamics are the beliefs, assumptions, values, and learned behaviours of the individual members. The impact of a group’s learning behaviours on its ability to undergo innovation and change has been evidenced in a

study that found links between the two (Widmann, Messman, & Mulder, 2016). This would suggest that to implement any meaningful change in the way the team operates, the leader will first need to identify the most promising learning behaviours. Through a systematic review of team learning literature, Widmann et al (2016) recommend sharing, team reflection, and team activity as the three most influential factors in a team's development. The usefulness of these behaviours is also evident in a study of secondary school Heads of Department in Wales where most participants cited formal and informal sharing of schemes and practice as being most effective in developing teams (Turner, 2000). All these factors require the team members to participate and be vulnerable; a challenge under any circumstances. The leader is thus charged with forming a cohesive unit of the disparate elements and finding a way to embed these learning behaviours in the unit.

While there may be other ways for a leader to go about effectively creating the environment required for productive interactions, Tuckman's (1965) recommendations for team development may still be valid: form, storm, norm, and, perform. Following further study and review, Tuckman's 1965 model was modified to include a fifth and final stage; adjourn (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). Applying each recommended stage to a New Zealand secondary school department would present the following picture, which while not reflecting each and every situation accurately, does provide a general overview and a sense of what may be. A team, such as a subject department group, in a secondary school allows for limited control of how it may be formed as its members may be appointed over a number of years by different people. Their selection would have probably been guided by the immediate needs of the school community at the time. The stage of storming or disrupting the status quo is next because continual change is one of the only constants in school settings. Creativity and innovation is most recognisable during this stage as the team develops better ways of doing things. The fifth stage of adjournment (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) may or may not be applicable. Teachers may leave the school or may accept another role within the school necessitating the adjournment of a team, and equally probable is that team membership and its common vision remains unchanged.

A set of four studies with three different samples of businesses in Portugal revealed that the goal of increased performance drove team adaptation (Abrantes, Passos, Cunha, & Santos, 2018). Emerging from the storming, a team decides the new norms that will see it perform better. The improved performance of the team is also seen to lift the practice across the organisation (Kayes & Burnett, 2006). Whether by association, or by comparison, the other teams in the larger organisation also begin their own processes of team development.

The importance of building the capability to lead across all levels of an organisational structure has been articulated (Amagoh, 2009; Kouzes & Posner, 2009; McCauley & Douglas, 2004) as has the belief that this development of leadership capabilities at all levels should become a part of organisational culture. As the main policy maker for secondary education in New Zealand, the Ministry of Education has also begun to recognise the importance of the ability of teachers at all levels to lead. The Ministry of Education's vision document for New Zealand education in 2025 includes a list titled "What does not change". The first point in this list reads, "The importance of quality leadership. The ability of leaders at all levels to lead during times of rapid change will be more critical to success than ever" (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 2). Classroom teachers lead curriculum delivery in their classes and are leaders in this sense. As a group, they influence a core function of the subject department. This suggests the need for a better understanding of the processes that support a group to form its own direction.

Direction forming for a team such as a secondary school subject department will probably be continually impacted by social processes including formal and informal interactions in the workplace. Chia (1997) explains that studies that employ a process ontology focus on actions in their research. These actions are situated in a particular context and occur over a period of time. A process ontology suits this particular study as one of the questions it seeks to answer is related to the emergence of leadership through direction forming for the group. Drawing on previous studies has led scholars to conclude that leadership is "constructed as emerging from these interactions" (Sergi, Denis, &

Langley, 2016, p. 44). It is based on change, rather than a fixed, owned, or established (Chia, 1997) set of characteristics. A relational, processual view involving interactions occurring over time and leading to emergence of leadership has also been put forward by Pettigrew (1992), Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) and Uhl-Bien (2006). Further, it is believed that leadership theory so far “has not examined the dynamic, complex systems and processes that comprise leadership” (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007) . This is consistent with other urgings for a process ontology (Carroll & Simpson, 2012; Denis et al., 2010; Küpers, 2007; Parry & Bryman, 2006; Raelin, 2016; Sergi et al., 2016).

This line of thought resonates with my own position on leadership which has been formed through personal experience, observation, and reflection. In my experience, effective leadership practice focuses on creating conditions that support students and teachers in their teaching and learning (Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009) and creating communities of practice that involve teachers as well as positional leaders (Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015). While the intentional actions of the positional leaders may be clearly informed by policy and therefore easier to identify, the processes that occur within the learning communities are not always noticed or documented. Direction may be formed through spontaneous interactions among all members of the group regardless of formal designations as much as through formal meetings, documents, and other school-wide tools such as Teams on Microsoft 365.

A broad overview of the historical basis of understanding leadership as a group quality may be gained from the works of Gibb (Benne & Sheats, 1948; Borgatta, Bales, & Couch, 1954; Gibb, 1958). Commenting on leadership in groups, Gibb (1958) described it as “a part of the problem-solving machinery of groups”(p.103) supporting Thelen’s (1954) view of leadership as a set of functions through which the group aligns the industry of individuals to achieve a mutually desirable outcome. These views concur with the functional approach that regards leadership in terms of guiding a group to grow constructively to produce outcomes (Benne & Sheats, 1948). It is of some interest to note that a discussion even as early as the 1940s assumed that “the quality and amount of group production

is the "responsibility" of the group" (Benne & Sheats, 1948, p. 41, inverted commas in original). This suggests that understandings of group processes and leadership in teams have been in development for more than half a century. Further, if groups and group responsibilities take centre-stage in understanding leadership, then it may be regarded as a group level construct as opposed to an individualistic construct.

This would seem to be in contrast to leader-centric studies (Bernard, 1926; Fiedler, 1967). As discussed earlier, the problems with adopting a leader-centric approach have been acknowledged and attention given to context (Nesbit, 2012) and processes (Pettigrew, 1992). Studies have also attempted to widen the understanding of the relationship between team processes and leader effectiveness (Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2002) by conceptualising an interface between leadership and team processes, and team performance. Building on this is the argument that "leadership happens as an outcome of team processes" (Day, Gronn, & Salas, 2004, p. 859). In the light of the aims of this study, this argument is highly relevant.

The approaches mentioned above reflect the current reality of educational leadership, and are hence deserving of closer attention in studies that seek to focus on the processes that generate the circumstances and momentum conducive to direction forming by the group.

Role of interactions in forming direction

Following on from a group level construct of leadership, studies have focused on the interactions that occur within a group. In her work, Crevani (2018) draws attention to the approaches to leadership studies that reduce a "social phenomenon to an individual's qualities" (p.2) and suggests that "leadership could instead be considered a phenomenon produced and sustained in interactions" (p.2). In hierarchical models of leadership, the individual leader may be expected to define and set goals in addition to working in a context that assumes that the individual leader is not only able to predetermine a universally profitable future, but also to provide the direction necessary to reach it.

However, studies that recognise the importance of the group over and above an individual pay attention to the outcomes of the micro-interactions within a group, arguing that instead of being predetermined, the future “emerges because of micro-interactions among people” (Stacey et al., 2000, p. 184). Echoing the same idea is the call for the understanding of leadership as an emergence from interactions (Carroll & Simpson, 2012).

As people interact against a continually changing backdrop, a dynamic may develop independent of the formally recognised roles. Schwandt (2008) comments on similar interactions and states that this active social construction results in people being formed even as they influence the formation of others. This formation includes leaders who must accept the influence of others even as they exert influence over them (Hibbert et al., 2017). It is also posited that individuals are wrought by the groups that they affiliate with even though these groups are formed by individuals such as themselves (Griffin, 2002). All these findings cast a new light on understandings about leadership as a process of influence within a group that may have previously been only viewed in a fixed leader-follower structure.

Formal interactions are also important in forming shared understandings about leadership within a group. These may be distinct from many of the relational micro-interactions mentioned in the previous paragraph. For instance, a scheduled department meeting could be used to illustrate the formal construct of an interaction. In this situation, the time, venue, agenda and perhaps, even the order of speaking is predetermined. Turner’s (2000) study revealed that the process of professional socialisation in settings such as department meetings was recognised by teams as contributing to their learning about leadership. In Turner’s writing, the term *socialisation* is based on the explanation that it encompasses the processes by which an individual experiences leadership, including those that give knowledge and skills (Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1994). Except for the formality of the setting, these could be quite similar to the ongoing micro-interactions among team members in professional

settings (Stacey et al., 2000) that shape people and contribute to the emergence of leadership in forming the direction for the team.

Other examples of formal, purposeful interactions that may be described as processes that form direction for a subject department include task-related networks (Bartol & Zhang, 2007), catalytic affiliations (McGregor, 2013, as cited by Timperley et al, 2014), professional learning communities that feed into school culture (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2010), peer collaboration (King, 2004) and collaborative inquiries (Drew et al., 2016). What is probably a prerequisite for any of these collaborative, collegial occurrences is for groups, and in particular, a subject department to identify also as a community rather than just an administrative unit within the larger school body. This provides a setting based on trust that is important for honest interactions (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009; Melville & Wallace, 2007; Vanblaere & Devos, 2018).

Professional dialogue and collaboration for problem-solving

Honest interactions provide an opportunity for a meaningful expression of teacher voice. As teachers find opportunities to share opinions (Quaglia Institute of Student Aspirations, 2015), and the likelihood of their being open to working collaboratively improves, so does their sense of collective efficacy. This could well result in an illustration of the group learning to lead itself through everyday processes. This idea is further supported by the reminder that “leaders need to focus on facilitating team processes that promote collective direction setting” (Zaccaro et al., 2009, p. 93). One of these team processes could be dialogue that creates new connections, understandings and directions for the members of the team (Carroll & Simpson, 2012; Drath et al., 2008; Hibbert et al., 2017). Here, it would be useful to bear in mind that more questions are likely to emerge from such dialogic engagement (Risser, 1997) even as valuable innovations take shape (Anderson, Potočnik, & Zhou, 2014). Some of these questions may arise as traditions are questioned (Hibbert & Huxham, 2010), perhaps reformed, to form direction. The underpinning idea here is that of an ongoing and continual occurrence, rather than a singular one.

When teachers develop a shared belief that together they can make recognisable and positive difference to student learning, their sense of collective efficacy increases (Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). It inspires teachers to set more challenging goals and examine their own ways of teaching to make a greater impact on student outcomes. An enhanced sense of collective efficacy plays a significant role in motivating teachers to recognise their agency both as individuals, as well as a group. Here, peer collaboration and a sense of collective efficacy may be instrumental in helping them cope and determine how long they will be able to continue in these stressful situations (Bandura, 1997).

Dialogic engagement can be creative in unexpected ways. Space may also be created for group members to voice dissent. Despite the negative connotation of the word, dissent can be very useful and productive in forming direction for a group while its absence may result in faulty decisions (Grint et al., 2016; Roberto, 2013). Roberto (2013) uses ideas attributed to King Cyrus, believed to have ruled around 530 B.C., to illustrate the importance of listening to diverse opinions for effective leadership when he refers to “the challenge of cultivating constructive conflict” (p.18). The currency of the wisdom and value of this challenge still holds true, and when effectively addressed, may yield novel solutions to entrenched problems. All too often, group members express agreement to avoid confrontation or submit to the perceived superiority of another. Another reason for members to concur may be strong social ties within the group, and the reluctance to lose the group’s inclusion (Sethi, Smith, & Park, 2002). An unhealthy dynamic may emerge and prove to be counterproductive as worthy solutions go unnoticed. This may also be linked to Complex Responsive Processes (Stacey et al., 2000) that are “relational processes of communication” (p.188) and encompass “the creative and the destructive” (p.190) during the enterprise of “actively constructing the future as the living present” (p.188). Therefore, dissent and doubt also have roles to play in forming direction because they draw attention to ideas and approaches that may not have been considered yet. By almost forcing an examination of hitherto neglected facets, both may serve as a balancing mechanism; a gyroscope for the group.

Direction forming in New Zealand secondary schools

Direction forming for a group is a future-focused activity. Stacey et al (2000) express an interest in “understanding the process of organising as the ongoing joint action of communication” (p.187) and the “relational processes of communication” through which direction is formed towards a future that is “unknowable in advance” (p.188). The constant mingling and overlapping of organisational roles suggests that direction is formed more through processes than prescribed or traditional roles. Schools may be said to experience swiftly changing organisational environments which require agility to navigate. Rapid technological advancements influence direction forming for subject departments through physical structures such as MLE (Modern Learning Environments), and tools such as BYOD (bring your own device) and LMS (Learning Management System). Subject departments may find themselves having to continually anticipate and adapt in order to make the best use of these to improve student outcomes. Thus, the processes are continually forming and re-forming direction.

Here, it would be fair to apply the adage that change is the only constant and subscribe to the view that “leadership is concerned with direction-setting, novelty and is essentially linked to change” (Grint et al., 2016, p. 3). There is a possibility that subject department groups will have to form their way out of problematic situations that have never been encountered before, much like the “groups” that have to “learn their way out of problems that could not have been predicted” (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007, p. 300). People’s capacity to cope successfully with change may be related to the development of a positive and collaborative work culture at school (Stoll & Fink, 1996). This has already been illustrated several times in the New Zealand secondary school sector. For instance, when a new assessment system was introduced across New Zealand in 2002 and again when the existing curriculum document was replaced in 2009, subject departments were encouraged to participate in professional learning days organised by the NZQA and the Post Primary Teachers Association to establish a collaborative work culture. Popularly known as Jumbo days, the day-long sessions were organised at different venues all over the country for teachers to network and collaborate. Subject associations followed suit and organised subject specific professional learning sessions with National

Subject Advisors and Moderators from NZQA More recently, there has been an increasing emphasis on participating in Department inquiries and work together to gather evidence for the annual appraisals required for renewing Practising Certificates³.

Recently, the TSP (Teaching practices, School practices, Principal leadership) (Wylie, McDowall, Ferral, Felgate, & Visser, 2018) tool was created and applied by researchers to get the first national picture of educational leadership practices in New Zealand schools. Besides professional literature from countries other than New Zealand, researchers also relied on policy documents from agencies such as the Education Review Office and Education Council, to determine the aspects that were perceived to be of the greatest importance to teaching and learning in New Zealand not only at the current time, but also in the years ahead. Among the teaching practices identified as being done very well is the ability to ‘promote understanding of others’ perspectives and points of view’(Wylie et al., 2018, p. 4) suggesting that the teaching community seeks to be inclusive. It is also reported that ‘even in a difficult environment staff in this school can depend on each other’ (Wylie et al., 2018, p. 5), further highlighting the role of interpersonal, professional relationships in the workplace. School practices often did not support conditions required for collaborative sense-making and improvement through inquiry and evaluation and school goals did not always direct daily work (Wylie et al., 2018, p. 6). Less than a quarter of the participants thought that the school practices included providing ‘sufficient time for collaboration’ (Wylie et al., 2018, p. 69). It may be inferred that organisational structures and practices do not always provide the support that is sought by subject departments in implementing processes.

³ A current practising certificate signals that a teacher has recently demonstrated that they are of good character and fit to be a teacher, have had a satisfactory Police vet and have been meaningfully appraised using, and have met, all of the *Practising Teacher Criteria*.

Regine and Lewin (2000) also believe that while the workings of organisations may not be predicted, “their direction and how they evolve can be influenced” (p.9) bringing us back to the critical importance of processes that form and reform this direction (Gunter, Hall, & Bragg, 2013; M. Johnson, 2000). Problems and unpredictability seem to be unavoidable and hence, seeking an understanding of processes that will assist in creating suitable responses to them seems a logical next step to better understand how direction is formed for secondary school subject departments.

Teacher agency

Changing approaches to planning curriculum policy have led to “an apparent reinstatement of the teacher as an active agent of change” (Drew et al., 2016, p. 92). Since designing and delivering the curriculum is one of the essential functions of a subject department, recognising the inherent agency of teachers signals their role in forming the direction of their subject department. Agentic behaviours usually thrive better in an environment free of a fear of repercussions as teachers are able to take risks and trial new ideas with peer support. Therefore, the significance of an environment of trust is highlighted.

Along with structures and practices, leader and follower identities may evolve, change and be exchanged over time (Collinson, 2006) and be reflected in direction forming and reforming for the subject department team. The complexity and variety of leadership functions may lead to swift changes and exchanges of roles, placing teachers and positional heads in more horizontal structures of hierarchy. For instance, the introduction of a school-wide policy on digital learning may see teachers who have prior skills and interest in this field take the responsibility for its implementation across a subject department. It is not uncommon for a department meeting to be led by more than just the positional leader. Not only new initiatives, but also basic departmental functions such as moderation of internal assessment and professional learning benefit from a sharing of skills. In some cases, subject department heads may encourage others to take the lead as a strategy to manage their own workload. It is possible that an ongoing collective “endorsement” (DeRue & Ashford, 2010, p.

627) occurs within the group for leader and follower identities to emerge, change, and develop according to the context.

Along with dialogue, feedback and mentoring have also been recognised as constructive processes in the direction forming of small teams. Participatory feedback is seen to generate trust and encourage reflective processes when it is incorporated into all department functions (Hatchimonji et al., 2018; Morgeson, DeRue, & Karam, 2010). Teacher agency is activated when instead of being passive recipients, department members are able to experience ownership and engagement in the learning process (Cohen et al., 2009) which is much like the “strong collectivities” advocated by King (2004).

A 2009 Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration (Robinson et al., 2009) frames school leadership as leadership of a continually changing, developing, learning and inquiring organisation. Subject department groups would be one of the significant groups in this dynamic mass and practices of leadership in this group would be related to other school practices many of which may be contextual. For example, a secondary school with a small roll of student may merge learning areas to form a subject department. Thus, to focus on the “happening” of practices (Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015, p. 343) may also shed light on the processes that lead the group in a certain direction.

Professional relationships based on trust may make a difference for the development of a sense of community within a subject department. Agentic actions may include learning from and with each other (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2010), moving to horizontal collective processes and a system of rules through active involvement (Friedrich et al., 2015; Morgeson et al., 2010; Visscher & Witziers, 2004), and concerted action through relationships (Woods et al., 2004). It is expected that these professional relationships will reveal individual strengths as well as learning needs. Individual members may be supported to generate creative ideas through specific mentoring programmes (Dong, Bartol, Zhang, & Li, 2017) that may feed into ongoing collective processes. It is not necessary for the mentor-mentee roles to be determined by positional authority or a vertical hierarchy as an increasingly horizontal

structure begins to form. Also, these roles may not be fixed and continue to evolve and change as direction is re-formed.

Summary

Professional literature from the fields of general leadership and educational leadership, including studies on constructs of leadership and leaders, has been examined to build a pathway into team leadership studies. Since the aim of this research study is to extend understandings of processes of direction forming and the emergence of leadership in secondary school subject departments, literature focusing on group processes was reviewed next. Next, the terms ‘direction forming’ and ‘teacher agency’ have been discussed in the context of the research aims of this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

This chapter begins with an outline of the philosophical positioning of this research study and the methodology. Next, it describes the research context of secondary school subject departments, and how participants were selected to gather data through semi-structured interviews. This is followed by the ethical considerations that informed the semi-structured interviews.

Having introduced the rationale for the study, articulated its aims, stated the questions the study sets out to answer, and presenting the themes that surface in existing literature, this chapter focuses on delineating the theoretical orientation and conceptual framework within which the study is situated. As a novice researcher, it is all too easy to proceed directly from the aim of a study to its design without paying sufficient attention to its positionality or where it is situated (Romberg, 1992). In order to mitigate this shortcoming, a brief description of the theoretical orientation and conceptual framework of the study follows.

Theoretical orientation and conceptual framework

The study subscribes to the sociological theory of knowledge which believes that all human development is socially situated. In order to understand the processes that form direction for subject departments, it is important to remember that subject departments are a social group in themselves. Teachers' accounts of their experiences of processes were from their individual points of view. Participants shared their experiences of interaction with others and the corresponding meanings they developed of the same. The term 'social constructivism' is attributed to Berger and Luckmann (1967). Their seminal work, first published in 1966, explained how meanings and understandings are created by individuals as they make sense of their experiences of the world around them. Social constructivism has also been described as an interpretive framework by Creswell and Poth (2017).

Before describing and justifying the selection of a research paradigm, it is worthwhile to briefly consider the four paradigms for the analysis of social theory put forward by Burrell and Morgan (1979), arguing that “all social theorists can be located within the context of these four paradigms according to the meta-theoretical assumptions reflected in their work”(p.24). The value of this exercise in consideration is in the facility it brings to further discussion of research paradigms. The four paradigms succinctly presented in a four-box figure titled “the sociology of radical change” (p.22) are: radical humanist, radical structuralist, interpretive, functionalist. They also make a clear statement of how these four paradigms are contradictory and therefore mutually exclusive and do not lend themselves to synthesis. Despite this clear distinction, it is possible to locate one’s operations within each of these at different times of one’s intellectual journey. Broadly speaking, the functionalist paradigm “seeks to provide rational explanations of social affairs” (p.26), the interpretive paradigm “seeks explanation within the realm of individual consciousness and subjectivity” (p.28), the radical humanist paradigm “tends to view society as anti-human”(p.32) and seeks ways to liberate humans from existing social formations to achieve their potential, and the radical structuralist paradigm is concerned with “structural relationships within a realist social world” (p. 34).

The interpretive paradigm is concerned with understanding the world as it is from subjective experiences of individuals. The decision to position the research within an interpretivist paradigm is based on the need to use a constructivist theoretical framework to understand the research participants’ accounts of the processes of direction forming for their subject departments. Ontologically, interpretivists hold that reality is co-constructed, multiple, and relative (Berger & Luckman, 1967; L. A. Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; Rapley, 2001) and therefore it is difficult to interpret in terms of fixed realities (W.L. Neuman, 2000). Interpretivists contend that an objective interpretation of the subjective experiences of individuals is possible as the “interpreter objectifies that which is to be interpreted” (T. A. Schwandt, 2000, p. 194). An interpretivist epistemology may also be classified as hermeneutic since it accentuates the idea that to understand a human action, its

context must also be recognised and understood since these multiple realities depend on other systems (W.L. Neuman, 2000).

The philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer (2004) is a different way of illustrating interpretive understanding. It contends that understanding is not “a rule-governed undertaking, rather, it is the very condition of being human. Understanding *is* interpretation” (italics in original) (T. A. Schwandt, 2000, p. 194). In any given moment we, as humans, are engaged in understanding intellectual experiences just as much as we are in making meaning of the information involuntarily gathered by our senses. This understanding arises from an engagement with all the different beliefs, preconceptions, values and experiences we bring to the interpretation. The “task of hermeneutics is to clarify this miracle of understanding” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 303).

The interpretivist researcher focuses on understanding motives, challenges and other subjective experiences that are closely linked to time and context (L. A. Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; W.L. Neuman, 2000). Thus, “interpretivism assumes an epistemological understanding of understanding” (T. A. Schwandt, 2000, p. 193). For the interpretivist, reality is subjective (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) and therefore there may be numerous, diverse compositions of reality (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Instead of an exclusive construct of objectivity, through use of this methodology, knowledge is socially constructed through ongoing negotiations and interactions (Berger & Luckman, 1967; L. A. Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; W. L. Neuman, 2014). The research process itself takes the form of an interaction between the interpretivist researcher and the participant as interpretations are co-constructed (Fontana & Frey, 2008). Therefore, the researcher is positioned as an engaged and allied observer at an equal footing with the participants (Titchen & Hobson, 2011).

A rigid structural framework is not the best tool for interpretivists as “the movement of understanding is constantly from the whole to the part and back to the whole” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 302) aligning with the processual perspective of leadership that this study employs. Research structures that are personal as well as open to personalisation are suggested instead (Carson, Gilmore, Perry, & Gronhaug, 2001)

since they are better suited to capture the nuances of human interactions and experiences. The researcher's own prior insight of the context of research is acknowledged, but considered insufficient to form a design that can effectively deal with all the levels and aspects of a changing reality (L. A. Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). Since no single external reality is recognised in an interpretivist ontology, the research focuses on seeking to understand specific contexts through perceived knowledge (Carson et al., 2001). The interpretivist ontological viewpoint is that understanding does not develop in isolation. Continual negotiation, interaction and communication is necessary for understanding to emerge and develop (W.L. Neuman, 2000). All these aforementioned factors suited the purpose, nature, and context of this study which depends on teachers' accounts of the processes that are instrumental in the formation of direction for their subject departments. Therefore, I was able to proceed to the data-gathering stage of the research with an informed confidence in its methodology.

Enlisting participants

In order to include both positional leaders such as Heads of Department as well as classroom teachers with no positional authority, expressions of interest were invited from staff at Auckland secondary schools. To begin the selection process, the school Principals and their Boards of Trustees were contacted. Once all relevant information about the study had been made available to them, they were able to make an informed decision of consenting to their staff's participation in it. Besides asking the Principals to convey my invitation to participate in the research to the staff, I also asked to give a very brief oral presentation of the research topic and its aims to the staff. Interested staff were requested to contact me directly via email. I was looking for teachers and subject department heads who had been with their respective departments for at least three years in the belief that people who had spent a reasonable length of time in the same group would have more telling insights into the direction forming processes for the group.

As per the research design, the first point of contact were Principals of four secondary schools in South and Central Auckland. This contact was made as soon as the Ethics Committee granted approval. A formal letter of invitation, the participant information sheet, and a consent form was

attached to a brief email message requesting access to their teaching staff (Appendices A, B, C, and D). By the next day, three of these schools responded declining the invitation and one school accepted it. Given that the school term was about to end, Principals indicated their staff were too busy to participate in research. Over the next two days, invitations were emailed to thirteen other schools resulting in two more schools agreeing to participate. Schools that did not respond to the email were contacted via telephone to follow up on their decision regarding the invitation to participate in the research. In all cases, the Principal's office promised to find out and get back to me. However, this did not happen. I took it to mean that schools were either not interested in participating, or were too busy to respond on account of the NCEA practice examinations.

Three expressions of interest were received within two days of the schools agreeing to participate in the research. The candidates came from a mix of small and large departments. Two were positional department leaders, while one was a teacher without any formal designation. All three were recruited to participate in the study. Since all candidates wished to be interviewed at their workplaces within the coming week, appointments were set up accordingly. Another two expressions of interest were received soon after, taking the total number of participants to five. The last two participants were also subject department heads. They chose to be interviewed during the school holidays as the end of the school term was a very busy time for them. The Participant Information Sheet and the Participant Consent Form was sent to the selected participants within five working days of receipt of their expressions of interest, with the understanding that they would be required to sign a hard copy of the Consent Form at the time of the interview. Two people who sent in expressions of interest, but were not selected to participate in the study were thanked for their interest and informed of the outcome via email. They could not be included in the study because their expressions of interest did not arrive in time for the data-gathering stage. Participants had five working days to respond to the initial invitation, and these responses arrived more than three weeks later.

Ethical considerations

Due diligence was done in designing an ethical research study. The process began with attending a workshop on this topic organised by the Auckland University of Technology (AUT). A draft was then submitted for feedback to the Ethics Advisor attached to the Faculty of Culture and Society. After the required modifications had been made, the application was submitted to the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) for approval. Contact was initiated with school Principals only after receiving formal notification from AUTEC of having provided evidence of following the principles of ethical research as set out by AUTEC:

- Informed and voluntary consent
- Respect for rights of privacy and confidentiality
- Minimisation of risk
- Truthfulness, including limitation of deception
- Social and cultural sensitivity, including commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi
- Avoidance of conflict of interest

While designing the research, care was taken to safeguard the professional interests and personal wellbeing of the participants. Written consent was obtained from the school Principals that the participants' relationship with the school would not be adversely affected. All reasonable efforts were made to maintain confidentiality from their colleagues. For instance, they could choose to be interviewed in a bookable space at the AUT South Campus instead of their workplace and pseudonyms were used instead of real names in the final report. A Participant Information Sheet (PIS) was provided to all who expressed an interest in participating to enable informed decision making.

As a secondary school Faculty leader myself, I was aware of being a member of the social group that my study was targeting. To mitigate the drawbacks of being an insider researcher, my own place of employment was excluded from the study. Another aspect of being an insider researcher that caused me concern was the perceived power imbalance since not all participants would be positional leaders

such as department Heads. More importantly, the very construct of an interview places the interviewer in a position of power since not only are all details designed to suit the interviewer's project, the overall operational control also lies with the interviewer (Rapley, 2001). Rapley (2001) writes of being 'artful' in guiding interviews as silences and non-verbal cues may also serve as signals to interviewees to add to what they have said. Among power characteristics listed by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), one points out that an interview may manipulate the interviewee to divulge information without knowing the interviewer's agenda, while another draws attention to how a research interview cannot possibly be an equal partnership. After due consideration of these ideas, I thought a realistic course of action would be to remain mindful of these pointers without allowing them to disrupt the flow of conversation.

As an insider researcher, I also needed to remain aware of my own personal bias that may have developed through prior experience and study. The following actions were taken to maintain the validity of teachers' accounts. All interviews were audio-recorded to capture the actual words spoken. Another advantage of having an audio file was that it captured the intonations that are important to accurately identify connotations. Participants were given the opportunity to check the transcript of their interview and indicate if it seemed inaccurate. Finally to remain objective and focus only on the teachers' words, I listened to the audio-file while highlighting the key points pertaining to the research questions on the transcript.

The main source of information about appropriate Māori protocol was the document *Te ara tika* (M. Hudson, 2010). Prior to the actual interview, some time was spent on developing whakawhanaungatanga⁴ with participants (Mutch, 2013; Smith, 1999). A brief kanohi ki te kanohi⁵ was of value in building connections with the participants through talking about experiences in common and personal identity (Vaioli, 2006; Walker, Eketone, & Gibbs, 2006). Building these connections was considered as being important because they would help build the environment of

⁴ Relationship, a sense of connectedness

⁵ Face to face meeting

trust required for participants to feel safe and be honest in their accounts. The bicultural identity of New Zealand was taken into account also by seeking advice about Māori protocols from a kaumatua⁶ at my school. He did not see any potential problems in my research design. Among other details, he reminded me of the significance of koha⁷ in the interactions I would have with the research participants. I decided to include this in the research design as a symbol of the esteem in which I held the ideas of the participants.

The Participant Information Sheet (See Appendix A) and the Participant Consent Form (See Appendix B) was sent to the selected participants within five working days of receipt of their expressions of interest, with the understanding that they would be required to sign a hard copy of the Consent Form (See Appendix B) at the time of the interview. Two people who sent in expressions of interest, but were not selected to participate in the study were thanked for their interest and informed of the outcome via email. They could not be included in the study because their expressions of interest did not arrive in time for the data-gathering stage. Participants had five working days to respond to the initial invitation, and these responses arrived more than three weeks later.

The main data collection tool was semi-structured interviews. All of these were conducted in a closed-off space at the participants' workplace in keeping with their preference. Care was taken to check that the participants had a clear understanding of the interview process, and what would follow afterwards. An external transcriber, who completed a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix F), was hired to ensure a quick turnaround for the interviewees. Since the transcriber was using an AI (Artificial Intelligence) programme, sometimes the interviewees' accent affected the accuracy of the transcript. Therefore, I worked with the transcriber to check the transcripts' accuracy by comparing them to the audio files. When participants were given a copy of the transcript, they were also asked to add, edit, or remove any material they did not want included. One participant drew my attention to an error, which I corrected. Three others were satisfied with the transcript. One participant did not respond to

⁶ Māori elder

⁷ A Māori custom which may be translated to mean a gift

the offer of commenting on the transcript. Analysis of the data began with a close reading of the interview transcripts to extract material that addresses the research questions. The next step was to unpack the material to reveal underlying assumptions. The tables prepared for this purpose can be found in Appendices G and H.

Semi-structured interviews

For the layperson an interview is a face-to-face or telephonic conversation for a specific purpose, usually inviting opinions and descriptions. One of the earlier definitions of an interview describes it as, “a face-to-face verbal exchange, in which one person, the interviewer attempts to elicit information or expression of opinion or belief from another person or persons” (Maccoby & Maccoby, 1954, p. 449). The purpose could range from offering employment to publicity. Keeping the interview on track is seen largely as the interviewer’s responsibility, and it is common practice for them to go prepared with a set of questions and/or provocative statements designed to draw out the interviewee’s ideas. Since an interview implies a purposeful activity, it can never be completely unstructured.

Semi-structured interviews were selected as the data-gathering tool for two main reasons. First, this structure allows the researcher to ask clarifying questions (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). It may be important to paraphrase and ask further questions to check understanding of a participant’s response. Second, the possibility of suppressing data may be avoided through semi-structured interviews because additional questions may be asked to draw out more details. Besides, interviewing individuals separately sets the tone for confidentiality, something that may not be possible in a group interview situation (Corbin, Strauss, & Strauss, 2014).

For this research study, it was important to remember that if the interviewer (myself) remained firmly bound by a structured interview and only considered the answers received to the prepared questions, the interviewee’s full potential may not be tapped. Besides, the research may have led to predictable conclusions adding little or nothing to the topic being studied. Therefore, a better course of action was to aim for a conversation that allowed interviewees to speak from their own perspective without

feeling fettered, be provoked to respond and question, express concerns, and defend their beliefs (Latour, 2000; Parker, 2005) as this would allow the study to benefit from the “dialogical potentials for knowledge production that are inherent in human conversations” (Brinkmann, 2018, p. 579). Semi-structured interviews were selected as the data gathering tool because besides giving the interviewees greater leeway, it would allow me to focus the conversation on issues that are most relevant to the questions the study aims to answer.

The questions were designed to elicit descriptions in the belief that teachers’ accounts of their experiences and understandings of direction forming in their subject departments would generate material that could be analysed to extend understandings about the processes involved therein. For indicative interview questions see Appendix E. As I prepared to conduct the semistructured interviews, I reflected on the validity of the potential data. Recognising the constructionist conception that focuses on the situational nature of interviews, I could identify with the metaphor of researcher as a traveler and the context of the interviews as the places encountered on the journey (Brinkmann, 2018) and remain keenly aware of the processes involved in knowledge production through the purposeful conversations. Since I was a participant in a situated interaction, the resulting data would be a co-constructed reality. The interviewees would be tailoring the descriptions of their experiences to fit my questions and research focus thus necessitating a rearrangement of facts. The interview situation would thus determine the accounts. On the other hand, it would be wrong on my part to generalise all interview data as being incomplete or inaccurate because they would be influenced by the situation. To resolve this dilemma, I decided to follow Brinkmann’s suggestion to adopt an approach that would allow me to regard the data to be both a factual report and a more general account “occasioned by the situation” (Brinkmann, 2018, p. 587).

In order to keep the teachers’ accounts focused on the aim of the research study, I took a set of indicative questions to each interview (see Appendix E). Before I began recording the interview, I asked if there were any questions about the Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix A). Four participants had no questions before signing the Participant Consent Form. The other participant did

not have any questions before signing the Consent Form, but contacted me after the interview to seek further clarification about the protection of her privacy. Even though participants were requested to refrain from mentioning names of people in the interview, some names were mentioned. Where the name was part of a statement that I wanted to quote in Chapter Four, I replaced it with an ellipsis.

All participants were keen to share their accounts of how they experienced direction forming for their subject department. Jess, Peta, and Lyn described their context in greater detail than Max and Ann because they saw it as having a significant impact on the processes related to departmental functions. Supermarket vouchers were given to each participant as koha to show appreciation of their time and participation. Hard copies of the Principal's consent form as well as the Participant's consent form were signed before the interviews. A hard copy of the Participant Information Sheet was available at each interview. A list of indicative questions (Appendix E) was shown to participants before the interview began, and remained on the table during the recorded interviews.

Analysing data

Data for this small-scale qualitative study was only collected through semi-structured interviews. The quality criteria for the trustworthiness of this data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018) were checked using strategies listed in Appendix J. Initially each transcript was visited several times to identify emerging themes in the participants' answers to the research questions. A sample of initial thematic coding is provided in Appendix I. A thematic analysis, as outlined in Appendix G, was the next step. Appendix G provides a summary of the participants' responses to the research questions, along with my own inferences about the perceived challenges and supports in direction forming.

Three columns were headed by the research questions designed for this study. The fourth column was created to set out the perceived challenges and scaffolds that emerged through the teachers' accounts of direction forming. This column was colour-coded to highlight the contrast between what was hindering the department in forming direction and what was helping in this regard. The table was deliberately kept very brief to focus on the broad strokes.

The next step in this exercise of identifying themes was to attempt an unpacking of the most frequently repeated ideas that seemed to address the research questions (See Appendix H). Once again, colour-coding was used to differentiate between connotations. As I engaged with the ideas, I captured some of my own thought processes as questions on the table. In doing so, I tried to remain neutral and objective mindful of my own beliefs and values. I was also careful not to allow my own personal experience of leadership to influence these questions. Linking the questions with professional literature helped in this regard.

Further, the unpacked ideas were examined to identify the key themes that had emerged. These were: spontaneous, unplanned professional interactions at the workplace, leader generated processes, and existing organisational structures. Finally, it was noticed that teachers' accounts of directions forming for their subject department could be broadly classified as: processes, challenges, strategies used to overcome these challenges. These headings have been used to summarise teachers' accounts at the end of each interview outline in Chapter Four of this thesis.

Summary

This chapter has covered the positioning of the study in the context of New Zealand secondary schools. It has described the process of enlisting participants, and how the ethical obligations of its design were met. The chapter concluded with an explanation for choosing semi-structured interviews as a suitable method to gather data for this study. The findings from these interviews are presented in the next chapter of this thesis.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This chapter begins with a brief introduction of each participant before outlining individual interviews. All participant names have been changed to maintain anonymity. Each interview outline concludes with a table summarising the main themes that emerged. This is followed by a section on research findings that do not directly sit under a specific research question, yet add value to meeting the overall research aim.

Introducing participants

The research design expected to attract participants at different stages of their teaching career. However, it just so transpired that all the expressions of interest received within the stipulated time-frame were from experienced teachers. Four of five participants were formal designated middle leaders. After giving due consideration to the composition of this group, and discussing it with the research supervisor, it was decided that the semi-structured interviews would go ahead as originally planned. The participants were given the following pseudonyms: Max, Peta, Ann, Lyn, and Jess.

Max: An experienced teacher, Max has no formal leadership position at his current workplace. Having taught overseas, it took him some time to recognise the flexibility of NCEA and the rich opportunities for learning that the system carries within it.

Ann: An experienced Head of Department, Ann has been at the same school for several years. This continuity of service has enabled her to develop a broad vision of the direction her subject department is developing and modifying as an ongoing feature of departmental functions.

Peta: At the time of interviewing Peta was at her third workplace, the second as Head of Department. She had handed in her notice resigning her current position on account of philosophical differences with the Principal about a vision for the Department.

Lyn: Lyn has been at the same workplace for several years. This has deepened her understanding of the impact of change in senior leadership on departmental direction-forming. As Head of Department, she works closely with other curriculum leaders.

Jess: An experienced Head of Department, Jess has been at the same school since it was established. She feels invested in the school's overall direction, while seeking to align her subject department to the same.

Interview outline: Max

The first interview was with Max who was very forthcoming about his understanding and expectations of direction forming in his subject department. As a teacher with a broad range of experience in New Zealand and overseas, Max could articulate his own professional development in relation to department functions. Though currently affiliated with one subject department, he began teaching in a different one, and was looking to align with a third one next year. Max has no formal or positional authority in his subject department.

The interview began with questions about how his department is structured and the sharing of responsibilities. An early statement in Max's account brought up the importance of open and honest conversation when he said:

Having just an open conversation with... but also having the scope to be kind of just given autonomy and being able to run things how I want them, and that's allowed me to be really flexible... Just got an open dialogue about success. It's a big point of conversation right now... like what are we doing, what are we really doing here.

Max was quite clear that the ongoing professional conversations among teachers in his department were the backdrop for all departmental functions. Teachers talked about the purpose and processes as much as they did about the goals of their department taking into account the specific context of their subject. Max is certain the department processes are guided by purpose; positive student outcomes

and authentic learning. He thinks the other teachers are also quite good at spotting when the focus shifts from the original purpose to compliance.

...And that's the one thing you know when you know when you feel like you're sort of compromising it's when you're putting systems above purpose. Am I ticking the box for the person above me what they want to see as opposed to just maintaining integrity and sticking to our purpose. ... and so for me that's always been my focus...

Max described the school Principal's role as one of attentive support. The vision for the department was co-constructed by the teachers, and having the Principal's active involvement meant that the plans materialized as they were modified to suit the changing context. Max valued having a positional leader listen to his ideas, understand the big picture, and provide the required resources including ongoing encouragement.

The principal who really understood my vision right from the outset which was fantastic. ... So yeah he got it and he'd come to me and I'd say I've got ... so we could do this and yes we could do that. So he was kind of putting it together and understood the whole ... the whole different take on the subject. It was more of an affirmation maybe an encouragement to say yes, I get it. I get where you're coming from keep going you know... like ... let's work on that.

The interview then moved into an account of the barriers that were encountered in direction forming for the department. While Max, the other teachers in the department and the Principal felt they were in a harmonious relationship where they could express dissent and float new ways of doing things, the subject department head was not a part of this group. Max described the head of department as a positional leader who believes in a firm top-down hierarchy, frequently refers to teachers as "you people", and is quite divisive in his attitudes.

And that really really (sic) didn't go down well with the head of department because

everything had to go through him. It is very much a dictatorial type yet ended up with no decisions. He'd say things like this is not for you people and you people don't get to decide.

Max spoke at length about the value of dissent in forming the direction of a subject department and keeping its functions purposeful by ongoing constructive criticism, experimentation and review. He thinks that having people express dissent may be disruptive, but it is one way to ensure that a group develops coherence.

I think that it's an absolutely integral necessity in any department any institution. Dissenting voices you know ... conformity and expectations of toeing the line. You know it's just it's ... that's how you destroy an organisation. You know you need to embrace dissenting voice. From a point of view of understanding what's being said for starters but also why ... where it's coming from because people get a tunnel vision about their vision... they have an agenda and when they hear a dissenting voice, they reject it straight away, outright ... and the reality is that the reason the person is speaking up is because they care. You know it's not because they're trying to control or disrupt ... but it's called dissent, and it is disruptive, but that's not a bad thing.

Besides pointing out the danger of developing a tunnel vision, Max was very clear about the purpose of voicing dissent is improvement and betterment of the situation for all stakeholders.

...also to improve the situation for everybody for everybody is. And if it's never discussed then nothing ever changes. And some people like that they don't want anything to change because they're very much in control and they're very much in their comfort zones...

When teachers feel unsupported by the formal leaders charged with the task of supporting them in their professional functions, it drains them of enthusiasm and efficiency.

And it has a lot of inefficiency that's not necessary yet. Right. And it's an awful lot of ... sigh ... emotional energy wasted you know because ... you only have so much energy you know

be that emotional and physical energy ... but if you're drained of emotional energy from the kids or from colleagues.... and the teaching just suffers in the end and we shouldn't be stretched out thinly. And that's the problem with our profession. We are stretched that thinly that we're just barely keeping it together particularly if you're one of those people who are one of the others. You know you people talking on the front line and you got no support and you feel alone. It's just this you feel isolated. It's just awful. When the very people who are supposed to be supporting you just literally trying to do this and put you under the thumb constantly.

Speaking about processes that might empower departmental members to make a meaningful or recognisable difference to the decision-making in the department, Max listed being invited to speak and negotiate on issues that impacted student outcomes as being most important. Open lines of communication would go a long way in creating a collaborative culture. In the absence of a willingness to collaborate, a toxic workplace develops and people feel resentful and defensive. The struggle for power and control dominates all departmental functions. Open lines of communication would go a long way in creating a collaborative culture that focuses on student outcomes rather than issues of power and control.

Another process that Max identified as being influential in forming a subject department's direction in a secondary school is by redesigning structures to adopt a "sideways hierarchy" in which the classroom teachers are supported by several layers of people charged with creating optimal conditions for teaching and learning.

There's a place for hierarchies in some areas ... but they do far more damage than good or provide security or provide sound structure. You're better to live in a bit of a mess and be inclusive than try and have a top down hierarchy ... people use the word anarchist. I don't like it. It has negative connotations. I far more prefer co-operative concepts and enterprises than anything else that's a top down structure.

Table 4.1: Summary of Max's key points

Processes of direction forming	Challenges to direction forming	Strategies to overcome challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open conversations • Collaboration • Discussion • Dissent • Supportive and co-operative senior leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressure to conform • Rigid leadership – tunnel vision, conflicting visions and personalities • Vertical hierarchy • Sense of isolation • Need to manage perceptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear purpose • Develop a mindset that focuses on improvement • Instead of positional heads, subject experts lead department functions

Max's comments highlighted his passion for inclusive processes which he sees as being of utmost importance in direction forming. He acknowledged the seemingly disruptive outcomes of giving everyone a voice, and seemed to consider that as an acceptable trade-off for developing a culture of co-operation. Being able to maintain focus on improving outcomes meant less energy was being spent on unproductive personality clashes and personal agendas.

Interview outline: Ann

The second interview was with Ann. The participant is a positional leader and has been in the role for almost eight years. Since this subject is unlike most other mainstream subjects, the processes in this department also need to be more fluid and flexible to accommodate students at different stages and levels of learning. What may be working for some students in one class may not work for another class at the same level necessitating agility and quick modifications in curriculum delivery. Ann stated, "we do have a kind of a bit of a moveable feast going on".

The structure of the department places two other teachers in roles of formal authority. The physical teaching spaces for this subject are concentrated in a single building with only one teacher being required to teach elsewhere on campus. There is a shared workroom that is used by all teachers for socialisation as well as departmental functions such as marking and moderation and where "we talk a lot". Ann described the role of conversation as being the single most important factor in forming

direction for the department. Though there are formal meetings throughout the year, much of the daily direction forming is through spontaneous conversations. She thinks it is very important for “the voice of the person who is in front of the class to be heard” and expressed satisfaction in the knowledge that “teachers themselves have a small amount of autonomy in deciding their programme”. All department members have the opportunity to express their ideas and opinions. Sometimes there is a mutual agreement that also aligns with the school’s overarching vision. In that case no further action is required. In other situations, Ann may decide to follow it up with an individual or make time for another formal meeting with the group.

... everyone will have a chance to air their views as to why they think that. And we won't necessarily make a decision if I think that there's more talking to be done. I will carry it on or will make a separate time or I will go and speak to people individually.

While Ann tried to ensure that the dissenting voices were not quelled, she accepted that it is usually impossible to please everyone. She chose to be open and transparent about her own decision-making and the role of the school directives in this regard. She might say that while the idea has merit, “it is not what the department needs”, or that it is “not open to negotiation because of school policies”. Ann would like to think that teachers in her department feel safe to voice their disagreement because that is the culture she has been building. However, this approach brings its own share of frustrations and sometimes Ann felt she was “not getting anywhere” with making her own voice heard by the senior management. Decision-making at the senior level was frequently without any input from middle leaders. To counter this, some Faculty leaders had “middle leader meetings to resolve issues” created by policy decisions.

Ann recognised that it was important for her to encourage teachers to further develop their strengths and take the lead in various ways. For instance, “with the advent of BYOD⁸ in the classroom, some

⁸ Bring Your Own Device (**BYOD**) is a growing trend which encourages students to bring their own personal device for learning in the classroom and at home

teachers have a much more natural aptitude for it". Ann has identified teachers with the capacity to design and lead professional learning sessions based on e-learning. By doing so, Ann thinks her teachers "have had that opportunity to progress".

Speaking about the barrier to forming direction for the department, Ann cited shortage of staff as the single most important factor that stood in their way. Even though Ann was "more than happy" to welcome part-time teachers from other specialist areas, it had not happened. As a result, classes "become much too big to personalise learning". This is particularly concerning given the nature of Ann's subject. The department is well-supported financially and if they "need money for new resources and trips and the like", there is always enough. This did not fully offset the barriers to curriculum delivery. Ann felt that the impact of their teaching was reduced by class sizes. Students were not getting the attention they need and the department was having to "reconsider and redesign" the processes that had served well in the years leading up to the present situation. The current processes related to basic department functions such as assessment and professional learning in the department mirrored what was practised in the rest of the school.

The department depended on collaboration to overcome the barriers created by shortage of staff and space. Ann said that they had "become better at collaborating over the years", but there was a time when a single department member challenged the status quo by refusing to share any resources. By refusing to work with the other teachers, this individual created problems for the department because it became hard to monitor the progress of students in her classes. Also, it created tension among the group and trust was damaged. Ann stated that not everyone is comfortable with change and perhaps the non- collaborative teacher felt inadequate in some way, but currently the group had strong collaborators. A couple of department members were not completely on board with this, but overall the tone was very positive.

It's very much teamwork. And working together. And I think everybody can see the benefits

of that. We socialise together. You know ... I will have lunch in school. Everybody brings a shared lunch. I think that kind of friendship has spilled over into work most definitely. People are very very willing to help and support each other and to share their knowledge. And I think that's what's helped. We do have I mean obviously within that team we have different personalities and probably one or two are reluctant to go with change.

Ann's contribution to the study may be summarised as follows:

Table 4.2: Summary of Ann's key points

Processes of direction forming	Challenges to direction forming	Strategies to overcome challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation • Structured programmes • Professional conversations and socialising at the workplace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vertical hierarchy • Lack of consultation in direction forming • Inadequate physical structures such as classrooms and timetables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers have some autonomy • Flexibility in courses • Clear purpose • Collaboration among middle leaders to improve communication • Subject experts lead aspects of departmental functions according to their expertise • Open and honest communication

In this subject department social interactions, such as celebrating life events, seem to have a very important influence on forming the direction for the team on an ongoing basis. Ann cited "talking" as being the main process, regardless of whether it occurred in structured setting such as meetings or informal "catch-ups" in the lunch room.

Interview outline: Peta

This interview was with a Head of Department, Peta. Being an experienced teacher, and having worked at two other schools placed Peta in a strong position to comment on the processes that

influenced direction forming in a subject department. Her breadth of experience was considered valuable in gaining a deeper understandings of the processes of direction forming; the aim of this study. Peta shared an account of her experiences as a positional middle leader focusing on the most recent workplace where the structure of the department includes two other positional leaders. There are five full-time teachers and another almost full-time teacher. Three teachers voluntarily take responsibility for a year level each. When asked about how this had come to pass. Peta said that initially it was optional and then:

They just took ownership of it and carried on with it. Everyone likes to contribute ... something ...and I guess it makes them feel like they have some experience. You know that will be something they could talk about if they were going to apply for a job somewhere else which nobody ever seems to want to do anyway.

In this role, the self-nominated teacher-in-charge was responsible for several departmental functions such as:

makes the assessment task and is in charge of the moderation of each standard at that level and just keeps an eye on everyone teaching that level and jollies everybody along ... But then our processes are really well organised.

Peta explained that decisions regarding the context for assessment and assessment tasks were made collaboratively; sometimes during planning days, otherwise during ordinary working days. As a department, they discussed what might be the best thing to do. At the end of each year, teachers-in-charge of year levels updated all documents in the folder that Peta would set up for the following year. Unless a new Achievement Standard was being included, updating documents was not a time-consuming process. Besides modifying existing programmes, the department also created new programmes based on the learning needs of particular cohorts. While Peta was confident that they did everything collaboratively in the department, when asked to describe how this collaboration occurred and what facilitated its occurrence, responded that:

But that's the thing is it's hard for me to know the extent to which we work collaboratively and the extent to which I just think we work collaboratively.

One of the structures that facilitate the process of collaboration at her workplace is the existence of a shared workspace. Even though the teachers could work in their own rooms, should they be vacant, or use other shared spaces such as the library and staff room, they chose to use the department workroom. They gathered there at the start of each day and again at the end of most days even though there was no formal expectation to do that. Another organisational structure that facilitated collaboration are the mandated department meetings and professional development sessions. Peta is in favour of keeping the professional learning sessions quite unstructured to allow teachers the time and space to candidly discuss their problems and dilemmas, but since the senior management requires written reports of each session, this is becoming increasingly problematic. Collaboration amongst the department members extended to the unrestricted electronic sharing of all resources.

Speaking of the tone of the department meetings and other professional conversations among the teachers, Peta said that she thought teachers were not afraid “not to get good results” because she herself was honest about the times something did not go as planned in her classes. Teachers are able to own their own negative teaching and learning experiences because they know that “they will not get into trouble”. Besides, the student learning management system being used at this school allows for results for each teacher’s classes to be generated and shared. This is done for each assessment as a matter of general practice. Peta thinks that this transparency is helpful because it opens the door for conversations with her and other teachers in the department about what could be done differently. Moreover, Peta believes that while resources may be shared, individual teachers have to modify them to fit their own practice and students.

But I don't believe that she can teach the same way. So each teacher has to find within...

Within the frame of themselves and the student. How that can work. And some teachers will be good for some students and some teachers will be bad for some students. That's how that

works that you can't ask a teacher to... You can share your resource with another teacher but you can't necessarily... That's not necessarily going to influence their practice.

Peta was certain that while teachers collaborated and contributed, she led the direction setting process for the department by having a clear vision and philosophy for the subject. This vision was explicitly articulated and shared with all teachers in the department. Since she was “the one who explained to the senior management”, she saw it as her job to take the lead. Teachers are able to contribute to the formation of direction through ongoing professional dialogue, collaborating in department functions such as curriculum delivery, and voluntarily taking responsibility for administrative roles within the department. Peta remarked that while “there is a plan”, it is usually modified to suit the changing circumstances.

Everything is emergent spontaneous and unplanned ... at the same time as being planned. So there's a plan ... if we decide to change as we teach it... we do... we'll decide if that's what we want to do, or of all of us, or some of us will do with or whatever... if there's something unplanned we're good with that ... we can be quite flexible there.

Peta noted that even though these changes were made on the basis of the student outcomes data that emerged over the course of the teaching and learning, the “goodwill of the senior management” was crucial in this regard. The teachers might attempt to re-form the direction that was initially decided in order to adapt to the changing needs of teaching and learning, but the senior management may not be receptive to this approach. One reason for the senior management’s inflexibility may be a lack of understanding of the nature of this particular subject. Another reason could be a single-minded focus on credit gathering as opposed to gaining meaningful learning. The lack of senior management support arising from a misalignment of vision was identified as a significant barrier to the direction forming for the department. Peta was clear that little to no headway could be made if the department’s philosophy reflected a different version of the overarching strategic vision of the senior leadership

team. Describing teaching, learning and leading as a team sport, Peta stressed the importance of playing the same team sport.

So if you're playing on the football field and get a new senior management that says we're going to row boats from now on, you either have to be ok with rowing boats or you have to go somewhere else. That's how that works...

Her experience of a strong vertical hierarchy at the current workplace was a highly demoralising one and she was clear about the options available to her. In her opinion, Peta and her team had no say in how departmental functions were structured and implemented. They felt stifled and undermined by senior leadership, and thought "there's no point in staying in a school where the senior management cannot be persuaded that your vision for your subject is the right one". This experience also highlighted another aspect of direction setting for a subject department: how is the formation of direction impacted when decisions are made by those who have no curriculum knowledge of the subject. Not only was the Principal's lack of curriculum knowledge a barrier, it was also Peta's perception that the "Principal has so much power". The structure of the organisation concentrated all decision-making powers in the Principal. Peta thought "it's a huge problem for the sector as a whole".

A subject department's overall morale was also influenced by the Principal's attitude to teachers. Without ongoing acknowledgement, teachers struggled to sustain their engagement and effort.

The principal that you get makes a huge difference... it makes you feel like what you're doing is worthwhile and it makes you feel like even though it's hard it's appreciated. And that makes a huge difference not just for me but for the whole department.

Another example of this lack of philosophical alignment given by Peta was differing beliefs among the departments. Most departments at the school, according to Peta, believe that it is their job to make students achieve credits, and so keep trying to simplify assessments for students without due attention to the quality of the resultant learning. Peta believes that students must understand that learning is not

always easy, and requires effort. By taking ownership of their learning and being prepared to persevere, students will not only develop resilience, but also learn to challenge themselves to higher levels of achievement. Peta observed that if the students' experience of learning is not the same in each subject, they would find her subject very hard and may give up before making a determined effort.

So the barrier is when other parts of the school are saying what can we do to make it easier.

What can we do to make the children pass without thinking hard then that's a barrier to you having a different more thoughtful approach in your own subject area...

Another identified barrier was the “unpleasant” teachers who would not co-operate regardless of the efforts to accommodate their professional needs. The presence of such personalities in the team is usually highly demoralising for all because they do not make any positive contribution. Peta described the attitude of such teachers as being different from professional disagreement or dissent. Continuing with a sporting analogy, Peta said:

You could be the goalie or you could be the centre or you could be the winger but you can't play the oarsman if it's... if it's football or hockey and if you have that person, that person is never going to make a useful contribution.

There were also the outliers, who insist on taking a selective approach to curriculum delivery and that proved a barrier to the formation of direction in the department.

So you have an outlier who says... Oh no I only want to do X and not Y. I don't want to do what everyone else is doing all the time. ... But then how can you ensure that the kids are developing a coherent package of skills so that they'll be ready when they get to senior classes or leave school.

Sometimes the school's organisational structures, such as timetables, became a barrier to the department's philosophical direction. For instance, Peta's department decided to have mixed ability

classes, and did away with any sort of streaming. But since other departments continue to stream students on the basis of their grades, Peta's subject also ends up with at least one class that has predominantly low achieving students.

While Peta has not experienced a shortage of funds at her workplace, she understands that a cripplingly small budget would be a barrier to direction setting for a department. Even the most fundamental department functions such as curriculum delivery require adequate resourcing.

In response to overcoming the barriers to direction forming, Peta emphasised the importance of honesty and kindness. It is important to give credit where it is due. By acknowledging and “celebrating individual successes, the group empowers itself” to act collectively. This collective identity prevents individuals from feeling isolated or “broken”. Also, sharing all relevant information develops trust and collegiality. Peta believes she cannot do her best work if she does not have “complete information”. By the same logic, she makes sure the team has all the information it requires to function optimally. Peta’s contribution to the study may be summarised as follows:

Table 4.3: Summary of Peta's key points

Processes of direction forming	Challenges to direction forming	Strategies to overcome challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaboration in an environment of trust and kindness• Ongoing professional conversations• Documentation• Sharing information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pressure to conform• Rigid leadership – tunnel vision, lack of consultation with middle leaders, conflicting visions and personalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The positional leader co-ordinates all departmental functions• Teachers have some autonomy

The pressure to conform was clearly having a negative impact on the subject department’s morale and processes of direction forming. While they continued to collaborate and work together, they did not feel supported in their efforts by the Principal.

Interview outline: Lyn

Lyn has held different leadership roles at the same secondary school over more than a decade. Having viewed the vast canvas of a secondary school's organisation from more than one perspective, she is in a strong position to reflect on and review the factors that have impacted her experience of leadership across differing group contexts.

And I'm so lucky. It's really highlighted how it's dependent on the leadership at the top. Like you know that the whole philosophy of the approach to curriculum development is very dependent on who's leading you know...

Lyn could see how a senior positional leader's professional and personality strengths shaped their style of leading, how it impacted the departments, and how this left little scope for subject departments to make their own decisions about how department functions should be implemented. She recalled an instance where her subject department was enjoying a very positive environment on account of being able to trial and share strategies without fear of being reprimanded or shut down. At this stage there was a change in senior leadership with the new person declaring changes that were sudden and far-reaching. Lyn felt that created a divide within the subject department and severely damaged the trust that had been built. There was no consultation surrounding the changes, and teachers felt quite isolated by this approach.

There was no consultation it was just this was the way it was going to be. So she was given a brief. She was given a brief as to what to do.

Besides, the new approach to curriculum delivery created setbacks for student learning with several teachers finding that students were not ready for NCEA assessments when they arrived in senior classes. In retrospect, Lyn felt that the new person did not realise the impact the changes would have. It was more a case of the person employing her professional strengths without considering the context well enough. To counteract the sense of isolation and rebuild trust, Lyn worked to forge closer

professional ties with her colleagues. When the opportunity to take on additional responsibilities presented itself, Lyn accepted the chance to make a difference to school-wide practices.

Initially when Lyn took over as the formally appointed leader of the department, she felt challenged by the existing interpersonal relationships. Not everyone on the team was able to accept that they were now accountable to a former colleague. Where in the past they would have been happy to share their shortcomings and less-than successful outcomes, now they became defensive. This highlighted the importance of inculcating a sense of self-efficacy in teachers so that they could make better use of their skills and energy.

Lyn has consciously made an effort to create conditions conducive to the emergence of leadership in her own subject department. Reflecting on the processes that matter in this regard, she saw individual personalities and skills as important factors in how they moved together as a team through a process. She feels fortunate to have people who are willing to use their skills to create something that everyone on the team can use. By taking ownership and responsibility, they position themselves in a leading role without any formal designation or remuneration.

... department because they are very collaborative. They are very innovative. Like I've got one of my department members who's very into sort of e-learning and she's developing a whole sort of structure.

Recognising the crucial role of collaboration in embedding processes that ensure effective and positive outcomes for all stakeholders has also revealed the most common barrier to collaboration. Lyn feels that while there are constant reminders not to use paucity of time as an excuse, the reality is that nothing meaningful can occur if it is rushed. Therefore, Lyn protects department meeting times for professional dialogue, sharing resources and pedagogy, and team-building activities.

... and then I mean as a leader ... you've got to make time and space for the collaboration to happen. Sometimes teachers have done a really good lesson or tried something new that they

will present on that at our department meeting ... so that's been really helpful ... you do need to make the time and space for collaboration to happen. Otherwise it will never happen because people are just so busy teaching and trying to survive the term...

Departmental strategic goals are guided by the school's strategic plan. Lyn sees this as being helpful in determining and implementing a common vision for the team. Subject departments "have some leeway" in how they choose to contribute to the school's strategic plan, even though their "direction is pre-determined". Not having to create a vision of the destination from scratch means that the team can focus on the journey itself and feel more confident. The team co-constructs the success criteria and are able to self-assess their progress. It helps to have the "vision, specific goals and success criteria displayed" in high visibility areas in each classroom so that every person in the team lives the common vision.

Lyn identified "ongoing self-review" as something that could not be ignored while thinking of direction-forming for a department. The reason she gave for this was that co-constructed initiatives and goals can lose their effectiveness in a matter of months because of the rapidly changing nature of secondary schools. For instance, the student demographic has seen a recognisable change in recent years. It has therefore become important for the department to review the content and assessment of the courses being delivered. An honest reconsideration of the direction the department also prevents complacency. Lyn picked professional learning programmes as an example to illustrate the role of self-review in direction re-forming. Some time back, the professional learning framework for staff was overhauled by a new appointee who brought in a system that had worked very well as another secondary school. It was a well-structured system that was much appreciated for the clarity of purpose it brought. In this framework, "the goals, possible actions, and success criteria" were provided. Staff felt supported because it meant they did not have to do any extra preparation. Strapped for time, "any system that reduces their workload is welcomed by teachers". However, by its third iteration, it had begun to lose its lustre because people thought they had already achieved the objectives and were looking for fresh challenges and validation. The framework was now becoming repetitive and did not

evoke the engagement it once did. Teachers felt the need to be consulted and become more involved in how the framework was to evolve in the years ahead.

... but like now that you're comfortable with it and you kind of think well actually I need more of a say on where this is going...

Teacher voice was gathered through an electronic survey, but teachers felt it was all very tightly controlled and they really did not get an opportunity to express their issues. Lyn thought that the next step to address teacher frustration could have been to invite open dialogue and foster collaboration. The person in charge of professional learning would have found it very difficult to deal with the team's resentment of the idea of having to spend more time on an activity whose relevance they did not see.

You've always got people who are very ... who have done and who know different things. So I think if the time was given to such people to collaborate ... well, I think it takes the pressure off one person. Maybe just take a step back and let everyone just come together to talk about things... that could unfold as to where we need to go.

Speaking of barriers that subject departments faced in forming direction, Lyn mentioned positive aspects such as teachers wanting to achieve a "work-life balance". They were often reluctant to take on more responsibility and participate more actively because it took away from their personal time outside of school hours. Lyn was supportive of this attitude because she does not think it is right to let one's job control all aspects of one's life.

Another barrier was the lack of transparency and uncertainty about school-wide processes such as appointments to formal roles. For instance, at Lyn's school it had been noticed that applicants could take short-term measures to meet the stipulated conditions for appointment, and then withdraw their commitment to these measures. Some appointments had led the staff to speculate whether it was the timetable and subject area of the applicants that was guiding the outcomes. Lyn gave the example

that recent appointments to formal leadership positions had been from subject areas where finding replacement teachers was considered to be a straightforward task. In Lyn's opinion, this could be perceived as lack of integrity in those who were expected to inspire organisational trust.

Lyn's contribution to the study may be summarised as follows:

Table 4.4: Summary of Lyn's main points

Processes of direction forming	Challenges to direction forming	Strategies to overcome challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-wide strategic plan is used to inform direction setting • Sharing of professional expertise within the department to introduce and embed initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of formal recognition of contribution to departmental functions negatively impacts motivation • Policy changes are sudden and cause anxiety • Not all school-wide processes can be described as transparent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliberate actions are taken by department head to create opportunities to meet, collaborate, and be acknowledged for contributions

Direction forming for Lyn's subject department seems to be strongly influenced by the senior leadership's selected priorities. In turn, these priorities are often shaped by the area of professional expertise of those in senior leadership, and are not co-constructed or explained.

Interview outline: Jess

Jess has led a subject department at the same secondary school for over a decade. Jess spoke about the need to "make teachers feel valued" because that helped to create a professional environment that benefits all stakeholders. Additionally, she spoke of how school culture impacted her department processes. Discussing the role of collaboration in forming direction for the department, Jess thought it was "not an easy process" to adopt because the day-to-day teaching functions took up most of their time. Most importantly, collaboration depended on "teacher goodwill" as there was no formal

recognition or remuneration available for their contribution of time and skill. There were few pathways available for career development and “upskilling” teachers did not seem to be a priority. To build her team, Jess relied on giving timely and explicit praise and acknowledgement to teachers who came forward to work with others and willingly shared their skills. Those who stepped up to take responsibility of specific departmental functions were also motivated by the idea of self-improvement through experience. Because they took on additional responsibilities, they were often able to gain more autonomy within the department as they designed or planned for everyone. Jess saw this as a sort of reward for their extra work. Often this emergence of leadership was spontaneous and unplanned. Jess spoke of one person in the department who held a formal role, but was very reluctant to contribute to the department as a whole.

You know there's a lot of myth around collaboration and really the role of collaboration is solely dependent on how willing your staff are to work in that capacity. And they put up barriers if they're not willing. So collaboration only comes from staff who are genuinely in that with no agenda ... and so if you've got participants in your staff who have agendas then it's never going to happen and it will stall the whole process of direction setting.

One of the main reasons that collaboration was not effective was “clashing agendas”. Jess thought that a team could not be expected to function effectively as long as teachers pursued different, mutually exclusive goals. Conflicting personalities also prevented the team to work together on problem-solving.

Jess felt that it was difficult to have deep conversations about pedagogy and leadership at school because very few people had completed formal study beyond their post graduate teacher training certificates and diplomas. There was a paucity of ongoing and higher learning, particularly in senior leadership, that was having a negative impact on the formation of direction in her department. She felt that most senior leaders were either “out of touch” with the latest developments in pedagogy or

had only surface knowledge of the same. Jess was quite certain that the senior leader allocated to her department would have no idea of the workings and needs of the same.

A senior leader was assigned to each department, but in Jess' case, there had been little regular contact. Any meetings were strictly controlled by administration work. Appraisal meeting only focused on signing off the paperwork. Staff and Head of Department meetings were dominated by administrative task lists. On occasion, the last ten minutes of an hour's meeting was spent on discussing curriculum and teacher development.

Instead of starting there and giving us time to actually collaborate ... when it's 4:20, teachers are already going home in their head. It's not a good time to expect them to collaborate.

Jess described her workplace where personal professional growth did not receive much attention. Since senior leadership did not model professional growth, engagement and collaboration, it was usually not seen as part of the school culture. Besides, the school's strategic plan could be quite limiting and restrictive in terms of developing direction. Jess said it was "almost a non-conversation" because everything was already decided. Since the department has already implemented the strategic plans, she felt that she does not have to put in any extra work.

... it's a good thing. But it doesn't give you an awful lot of room to move... We've already been doing those things for a long time. So there are no direction setting processes in our department that are particularly creative.

There had been several rounds of rapid change in the overarching structures of the school. The changes had a direct impact on curriculum delivery and how they designed the courses. In the absence of consultation and adequate information, Jess and her department found the changes quite unsettling. Each time they worked with the new system, they spent a lot of time getting it right and training teachers to close the gaps in their understanding. Under these circumstances, there seemed to be no

opportunity for blue-sky thinking for her department. Her subject department team felt overworked and undervalued, and quite disempowered by these changes.

Ongoing cycles of self-review gave Jess the confidence that her subject department was moving in a positive direction. Having undertaken more than one complete cycle to map curriculum delivery across all year levels, attended subject conferences, and participated in teaching inquiries had added to her confidence. These strategies provided her with evidence as well as the understanding of the processes that were in play for direction setting in her department.

Jess' contribution to this study may be summarised as follows:

Table 4.5: Summary of Jess' main points

Processes of direction forming	Challenges to direction forming	Strategies to overcome challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaboration• Generate goodwill among department members through timely praise and acknowledgement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frequent structural changes have created a sense of instability• Conflicting agendas within the department• Conflicting personalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-review• Attend off-site professional learning sessions

Jess saw little scope for her team to influence the direction of the subject department on account of the strict and rigid framework set by senior leadership. Developing and nurturing teacher goodwill was identified as making the most positive difference to the overall smooth running of the department.

Overview of the initial findings

Reflecting on the tables of the key points of each interview revealed three main points. First, that all leadership processes in a subject department aim to meet the organisational goal, and hence, the purpose of the forming and reforming of direction is largely predetermined. Second that most processes and strategies are created in response to the ever-changing conditions, and are indeed reactive in nature. Finally, there seemed to be little recognition of individual agency or capacity to

impact the leadership processes in a subject department. The figure given below presents the essence of the initial findings that emerge from interviewing the participants in a visual form.



Figure 4.1 Overview of initial findings

In relation to the research question, “What are teachers’ understandings of how direction forms and reforms within their subject department?”, the constant point of reference remained the participants’ school goals. To varying degrees, all participants understood direction forming for their subject departments to be dictated by the organisational goals. The accounts suggested that departments were navigating, rather than deciding, their course. Operating within the confines of predetermined expected outcomes seemed to leave very little scope for leadership to emerge. Further, the examples of emergent leadership that were described by participants were not perceived to be examples of leadership practice.

In relation to the research question, “What strategies do teachers use to address challenges with departmental direction forming?”, the teachers’ accounts suggest that they are usually reactionary because changes are swift and unpredictable. Most of the time, there is inadequate opportunity to reflect, plan, and action an effective response. These changes may include organisational structures and interpersonal relationships making it necessary for teachers to remain flexible, and able to respond in the moment. Co-operation and collaboration were identified as the main strategies to address challenges with direction forming, suggesting that ability to influence direction resided in the group, rather than within an individual.

In relation to the research question, “How do teachers associate direction forming with key departmental functions?”, participants seemed to identify as a community rather than individual agents. While this seemed to be in accordance with the finding that direction was formed by the group, it brought the absence of the recognition of teacher agency into sharp focus. Since teacher agency was not recognised, it implied that emergent leadership was not acknowledged as a form of leadership.

Summary

Besides providing outlines of participant interviews, this chapter has introduced the first tier of findings of the study. Some main themes underlying these initial findings will be examined in relation to professional literature in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This chapter analyses, discusses, and provides an interpretation of the research findings. This is done by relating it to relevant literature in the field of general leadership, educational leadership, and team leadership studies. The analysis includes a discussion of the similarities and differences in the accounts of teachers who were interviewed.

Establishing the analysis framework

The first consideration of the audio files of the interviews, as well as the resulting transcripts of the same, suggested that teachers' experiences of direction-forming were not dissimilar in different subject departments even though the individual schools were quite disparate in their location, decile rating, and student demographic. Before any analysis, it was essential to organise material in a way that its common threads became evident. A four-column table (See Appendix G) was the first step towards organising the data.

Spontaneous, professional interactions

The occurrence of oral, spontaneous, ongoing professional interactions was identified as the single most significant process of direction forming for the department by Max, Ann, and Peta. In Max's case, these conversations included the Principal. Teachers' accounts place strong emphasis on the importance of ongoing and honest interactions among team members. Though some of these may occur in structured environments such as department meetings, the majority occur in unplanned situations such as being in a shared workspace at the same time. Besides, Max shares the teaching space with his colleague teaching the same subject and Ann's subject is taught in rooms that are in the same block. There is a high likelihood of conversations related to the ongoing teaching and learning in the department when colleagues are in the same location.

A possible challenge to the occurrence of such exchanges is structural. Should teachers not have non-contact periods in common, or if there is no provision for a common workspace, the chances of

spontaneous professional conversations would be few. Another challenge could be the location of teaching rooms for a subject department. Being situated in rooms that are either in the same building, level or area increases chances of seeing other teachers, who teach the same subject, more frequently. This may set up the group to form habits that support exchange of ideas. For instance, a teacher may have just had a student query that set her thinking about an alternative mode of assessment. Peta mentioned how her subject department tended to gather in the shared workspace to talk about teaching and learning before and after school. Ann's department has most of the teaching spaces in the same building, where it is usual for teachers to co-teach. Max shares the teaching space with the other teacher of the same subject. He values the enrichment it has brought to his practice while providing the other teacher immediate support with what may be fairly challenging groups of students.

Both positional heads and classroom teachers acknowledge the importance of building trust. In pursuit of an environment and culture of trust, positional heads may model vulnerability and be willing to share their errors as much as their good ideas. When Peta shares how an idea that seemed great did not really work out in the classroom, or did not lead to raising student achievement, she is demonstrating the importance of honesty. She encourages her team to question her choices and co-construct a plan for the next steps that need to be implemented. This could be considered as an illustration of the social construction that occurs through ongoing interactions (D. R. Schwandt, 2008). While the teachers in Peta's department develop an understanding of the importance of being open and honest about practice, Peta's own practice is influenced by the co-construction and dialogue that occurs in the team (Griffin, 2002; Hibbert et al., 2017).

In Ann's case, these interactions were aided by the nature of the subject. Given the wide range of student abilities and levels of learning, teachers chose to be honest and open in their professional conversations as a way to make meaningful modifications to their practice. As a department-wide process, ongoing professional interactions underpinned all department functions such as curriculum delivery, assessment, moderation and professional learning. When Ann first began as the Head of

Faculty, the culture in the department was quite different. She described it as being quite individualistic and almost secretive because teachers would not share their resources and practice. Gradually, networks formed on the basis of tasks that the team had in common (Bartol & Zhang, 2007) and collaboration among peers (King, 2004). The fact that the school culture reflects some degree of departmental agency in conducting their teaching inquiries in groups as professional learning communities (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2010) gave further impetus to these interactions. The addition of another layer of purpose served to further validate these ongoing conversations. Professional socialisation (Leithwood et al., 1994) initially occurred in formal department meetings before micro-interactions gained traction as an ongoing process. Consequently, the positional leader is now confident that these interactions are a clear and direct influence on the formation of direction for the subject department.

As a teacher with no formal designation, Max's account clearly outlined how much he valued open conversations and offers to share resources among the team. On several occasions during the interview, he mentioned how much his practice was influenced by the dialogue and constructive criticism that occurred in his team. These interactions sustained his practice, and hence the way direction was formed for a course design. Max experienced leadership through these ongoing professional conversations; a process led to the emergence of leadership (Carroll & Simpson, 2012; Stacey et al., 2000). Max and his peers formed and re-formed new understandings and directions that their subject could possibly take in the near future (Drath et al., 2008; Hibbert et al., 2017). This experience illustrates the idea that leadership is team-centric and emerges from micro-interactions among people (Stacey et al., 2000), which, in turn, could also include the process of feedback (Hatchimonji et al., 2018).

The informal, professional interactions discussed above echo Youngs' (2017) challenge to view leadership as a practice emerging across a group of people rather than as a role-based function first. Max and the teachers in Peta and Ann's departments illustrate the emergence of leadership through

practice. By affirming and praising teachers' efforts, Jess is also supporting leadership as a practice and promoting teacher agency regardless of formal roles.

Leader generated processes

Educational leadership has been identified as a significant factor in improving student outcomes (Bush, 2010; Robinson et al., 2009). Though a single definition of educational leadership may not be available, there is general consensus among researchers that it refers to those actions that uplift educational outcomes for students (Robertson & Timperley, 2011; Robinson et al., 2009; Seashore-Louis, 2015). One of these actions, at different levels of the organisational structure, may be to create frameworks that support this planned improvement of student outcomes.

Sergiovanni (1998) suggests pedagogical leadership as a “more effective alternative to bureaucratic, visionary and entrepreneurial leadership in improving schools” (p.37). Each teacher is a leader of learning in the classroom, and may demonstrate leadership through actions that influence the functioning of the subject department. In this case, the processes generated by the teacher may include participating in the professional conversations discussed under the previous sub-heading. By voicing their experiences and ideas for improvement, teachers lead thinking and actions to deliver better outcomes for the students, and thus, for the department. In this situation, leadership is demonstrated through actions and practice, rather than occupation of a formal designation in the organisation. Youngs (2017) recommends “shifting our gaze more to practice as it unfolds” (p.141) to extend understandings of leadership in higher education. This recommendation could also be applied to practices of classroom teachers in secondary schools.

Positional leaders may design formal processes to provide a structure for departmental functions. Regine's analogy of a fishbowl (Regine & Lewin, 2000) describes leadership as a transparent bowl within which the team enjoys autonomy to some extent. By setting safe boundaries, the leader coordinates the team's efforts. It is important for the bowl to be transparent to foster inter-relational

trust. An example of a leader generated process could be that of participatory feedback (Hatchimonji et al., 2018) that is built into the design of planned meetings. Receiving ongoing feedback can be highly productive when it is done in the spirit of improvement. Lyn sets aside time to observe and meet with the teachers in her department. Albeit short, these sessions focus on providing feedback that addresses either the learning needs identified by the teacher or what has been recognised by Lyn as being crucial to the department's functioning. Jess has a similar approach and tries to ensure high levels of engagement and motivation in her department by acknowledging the work of teachers and encouraging them to take ownership of their ideas. By leading others to lead themselves (Parry & Bryman, 2006), this process increases engagement much like in the case of Max who feels encouraged by the Principal, and therefore feels able to lead change in his department. Leader emergence may occur on the basis of leader endorsement (Tuncdogan, Acar, & Stam, 2017). When a person feels validated as a leader, it increases their capacity to influence the direction of their department (Melville & Wallace, 2007).

A contrary view is reflected in Peta's account when she speaks of her experience with a Principal who would not engage with any ideas that did not mirror her own. In this situation, the Principal saw herself as the dynamic itself rather than being a part of the dynamic (Avolio, 2007). This approach not only demoralised Peta, but also negatively impacted her ability to lead the team towards realising a shared vision. Ann's account also reflects the impact of poor leader generated processes. In her case, the Principal rarely interacts with her as a positional leader leaving Ann with mixed messages that leave no room for discussion or negotiation. Treated largely as passive recipients of decrees, both Peta and Ann feel disenfranchised and impotent. There is a real possibility that this negativity may spread to other subject departments in the school (Cohen et al., 2009) as evidenced by Lyn who felt demoralised by the way another head of department was not supported through a professional learning initiative.

Another example of a leader generated process could be the element of coaching and mentoring built into a mandatory process such as the annual appraisal. Interestingly, none of the positional leaders among the participants in this study identified coaching and mentoring as a part of the appraisal. Their experience of appraisal was not one of agentic leadership (Griffin, 2002). Senior leaders allocated to their subject departments were usually too busy to see them on a regular basis. When they did meet, it was mainly to go over the evidence for the Practising Teacher Criteria. In one case, a department head described it to be an annual meeting focused on signing the paperwork. Identifying this as a significant professional learning opportunity and recognising the alienation created by the lack of ongoing mentoring, subject department heads were making a conscious effort to observe, meet, and mentor their teachers.

Although occurring at different schools that have a distinctly different demographic of student population, these negative experiences of participants seem to highlight the importance of the quality of leader generated processes. When well-informed by teacher participation, they have potential to positively influence the emergence of leadership in a department group setting. On the other hand, they might be a leading cause of stifling the growth and regeneration of departmental contribution to the school's strategic vision. Overall, the implication seems to be that leader-member relationships determine the quality of goal-setting (Benne & Sheats, 1948), and hence, the effectiveness of direction setting processes in the group.

Collaboration in implementing departmental functions was seen as valuable on account of the peer coaching that occurred as a part of it. By working together, teachers in a subject department are able to get their learning needs met by peers. All participants were in agreement about the occurrence and value of peer coaching. Ann and Peta spoke of how effective peer coaching teams and pairs had developed quite organically in their subject departments once they, as positional leaders, initiated it as a deliberate process. Research also suggests that collegial affiliations improve the learning conditions for teachers (Showers & Joyce, 1996). A recent literature review of peer coaching as a

professional development tool across several sectors such as health and education (Hooker, 2013) recognises it as a viable means of improving practice. Hooker (2013) argues that it is necessary for mutual trust to be developed before such coaching to be effective, and that questioning and listening skills must be learnt before participating in peer coaching. Perhaps, the most significant outcome of ongoing professional interactions is the mutual trust it generates amongst the team members.

Role of existing structures in promoting collaboration

Existing school-wide structures such as timetables and workspace allocation were identified as fairly significant in forming direction for a subject department. Collaborative inquiries developed and leadership emerged through these spontaneous exchanges made possible by existing structures. Teachers also experienced agentic affiliations (Timperley, 2014) that motivated them to actively participate in deciding how departmental functions would be completed. For instance, in schools where teaching inquiry cycles were already embedded, teachers felt empowered to complete authentic and deep inquiries as a departmental team because they were able to share ideas and engage in dialogue without having to make any extra effort regarding schedules and meeting times. “Mutual dependencies” (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 41) that develop through such dialogic engagements were seen as a positive and empowering outcome.

All participants spoke of the importance of ongoing, informal, professional interactions and how much they valued having timetables with non-contact period in common with other teachers in the department. In Peta’s department it is common practice to gather in the workspace at least once a day. Max shares the teaching space with another teacher and, with her consent, is able to observe and co-teach as needed. Ann, Peta and Lyn appreciated being able to frequently touch base with their teachers because besides checking on curriculum delivery, they were able to check on their teachers’ wellbeing. It became easier for them to prevent feelings of isolation that could erode a teacher’s confidence. Overall, being able to collaborate on problem-solving led to creating an environment of collegiality and trust.

It is common for secondary schools to have a calendar of meetings and professional learning sessions. By conveying expectations of attendance and participation, such calendars may strengthen a sense of community and common purpose. As an existing structure, fixed meeting times could support the subject department groups to be prepared to share and participate in advance. It is usually easier to complete tasks and report or give feedback when there has been ample prior notice because it reduces the stress caused by last-minute imposition of deadlines. By spontaneously co-constructing the agenda of these planned and pre-scheduled meetings, teachers had another opportunity to influence the departmental functions. For instance, Peta's department meeting agendas are quite open. Thus, calendars may help teachers feel more secure and empowered. All the participants in this research valued the allocated department meeting and professional learning hours.

One of the ways that educational leadership is distinct from general leadership is in its obligation “to enable and constrain educational practices by creating the practice architectures hospitable to educational practices” (Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015, p. 356). Therefore, existing structures usually exert a strong influence on educational practices such as curriculum delivery and professional learning.

Perceived barriers to direction forming

Participants also identified the downside of essential structures such as timetables and meeting schedules as a barrier to direction forming. One participant described how having teachers teaching in more than one department meant that they were unable to attend all scheduled departmental meetings. Although the minutes of each meeting were published, it was not unusual for teachers to miss out on important information and therefore not take action as required. This usually led to more work for the other teachers in the department who had to step up to close the gap. Not only was this wasteful of time, but also the emotional energy of the teachers who were having to constantly give of themselves. For a team to move together, it has to come together both literally and metaphorically.

In the experience of two other participants, Lyn and Jess, some appointments to senior leadership positions had been determined by the existing timetables of internal applicants. It was felt that while a candidate's capabilities were taken into account, the final decision was guided by how straightforward it would be to adjust the timetables. These accounts illustrated social constructivism as evidenced by the participants; creating meaning of their experiences of the world (Berger & Luckman, 1967). The meaning they were making in this instance was that the tail was wagging the dog and if it was not NCEA's latest initiative, it was a pursuit of convenience that was determining how teaching and learning, and other departmental functions were being completed in their subject department. Jess' comment that they have "no real say" may be seen as an illustration of their sense of disempowerment.

Sometimes frameworks meant to provide direction restrict the growth of new ideas. For instance, in Jess' school the strategic plan so rigidly controls all other processes that much good thinking is given no consideration. Existing organisational structures are implemented to facilitate administrative coordination in secondary schools. These may be considered to be external constraints to the informal dynamics of a group (Kaufmann, 1993) in cases where there is a perceived lack of alignment between the overarching vision of the organisation and the immediate, shared vision of the subject department group. Peta, Lyn, and Jess' cases illustrate how the spontaneous emergence of leadership could be at odds with administrative coordination. However not all cases, such as Ann and Max, experience this level of incompatibility. The varying levels of compatibility seem to highlight the significance of the degree and nature of administrative coordination in supporting the group to lead itself, thus enabling the emergence of leadership (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007) and direction forming. The challenge for positional leaders seems to be to coordinate structures and contexts such that they enable all group members to contribute to knowledge and action production.

Strategies to overcome perceived barriers

It is in the context of overcoming perceived barriers to direction forming that leadership emergence is seemingly most prominent. Whether the strategies are formed by one person or many, they are the teachers' own way of getting past a problem. In this regard, each one of them participates in and contributes to the practice of leading. This may be considered as evidence of activities and practices that constitute leading and that may include encouraging and supporting others to engage in the practice of leading" (Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015, p. 346).

All participants referred to practices linked to enabling as a strategy to overcome barriers to direction forming. Max, Ann, and Peta cited conversations and discussions as a powerful way of maintaining momentum for the departmental functions. It was evident from Max's comments that clear communication is vital for direction forming. Ann echoed the idea of direct and clear communication while speaking of how messages passed through intermediaries may sometimes lose their urgency and purport.

Ongoing professional conversations that included acknowledging and praising individuals in the department for their work was recognised as a powerful strategy by Jess and Peta. They said that since there was no money or other incentives available to be used as rewards, it was important for them to continue to affirm teachers' efforts in leading departmental functions. Ann and Lyn affirmed the teachers in their departments by creating opportunities for them to showcase their individual strengths. Referring to the "happening" of practices (Schatzki, 2006), Wilkinson and Kemmis (2015, p.343) focus on organisations as "social phenomena" (p.343). In the accounts of the teachers who participated in this research, the social interactions and structures occupied a prominent position. They spoke of spontaneous conversations, sharing workspace and meals as examples of the eminently social nature of direction forming. Referring to their own earlier (2012) unpublished work, Wilkinson and Kemmis (p.349) reiterate the idea of the formation of a shared, rather than a positional responsibility.

Following on from this sense of collective responsibility, Peta's account highlights the importance of the sense of belonging to a group for a department to overcome setbacks. According to her, the teachers are very open and forthcoming about all aspects of their practice. Therefore, when things do not go as planned for an individual, the others provide support. Peta states that by modelling vulnerability herself, she is able to create a safe environment for the other teachers. This strategy has served to maintain cohesion in the department even as they have a philosophical conflict with the Principal.

Interface of organisational structures and socio-cultural factors

While unpacking the material that directly addressed the research questions, what also emerged was a set of data identifying perceived challenges and scaffolds for the processes of direction forming. This has been included in Appendix G since the aim of this study is to extend understandings of the processes of direction forming and re-forming. It is believed that examining these aspects of direction forming will bring greater clarity of what helps and what does not.

Further, an attempt was made to uncover the possibility of underlying ideas, assumptions, and opportunities. This is presented in the last column of Appendix H. I questioned the material that had been summarized in a table (Appendix G) to draw out other, possibly hidden, ideas. Most of the material had links to decision-making. Since decision-making is an integral part of direction forming, the challenge for all decision-makers is “How should I go about making the decision?” (Roberto, 2013, p. p.29), bringing the focus back to processes.

Among the perceived challenges to direction-forming, participants listed the vertical hierarchical organisational structure, shortage of subject specialists, class sizes, poor communication, and the high frequency of change in leadership and policy. The perceived scaffolds were all related to structures that facilitated interaction and collaboration: shared workspace, common non-contact periods,

department meeting times, freedom to self-select professional learning, teaching rooms located in the same building or block of the school campus.

A common thread in teachers' accounts was the articulation of the need to reconstruct the formal structures and constructs of formal leadership in secondary schools. Framing the idea in different ways, all participants spoke about the role of senior leadership in determining the direction for the subject departments. Their experiences of senior leadership were varied. While Max appreciated the Principal's involvement and the ongoing encouragement he receives, the rest of the participants were less than happy about the way the senior leadership roles were being enacted. Broadly speaking the existing vertical hierarchies were seen to be ineffective and unhelpful because instead of feeling supported, the positional heads and teachers felt they were placed under undue pressure to conform. Perhaps, it is better not to assume that leaders are somehow better than the rest of the group, or indispensable to the functioning of the group (Alvesson, 2017). There was a general call for leadership constructs that recognised classroom teachers as experts, and therefore, the leaders of learning. In particular, Sergiovanni's (1998) suggestion to recognise the effectiveness of pedagogical leadership seems to be reflected in these teachers' accounts. The positional authority figures' role in such a construct would be mainly to resource, co-ordinate, and review departmental functions to benefit all stakeholders.

Vertical hierarchies were perceived to be a challenge mainly because the people making school-wide policy decisions were often unaware of the nuances of daily classroom practices. Max thought that it was the responsibility of the senior leadership to ensure that classroom teachers felt supported in their efforts. In a vertical structure, that rarely happens even though "educational leadership refers to a capacity to nurture a learning community" (Caldwell, 2003, p. 26). On the contrary, teachers find themselves facing the pressure of ever-increasing bureaucratic demands.

Lyn, Peta, and Jess thought that decisions made for subject departments by senior positional leaders in a vertical hierarchy were often ill-informed. Some of the reasons they gave were a lack of subject curriculum knowledge, authoritarian approach, limited secondary school teaching experience, and knowledge of current educational leadership practice models. In the case of Peta and Lyn, senior leaders associated with a subject department lacked the relevant curriculum expertise. As mentioned by Lyn and Jess, hardly any senior leadership team members had undertaken further study following the initial Bachelor degree and teacher training. It was felt that their concepts and practice of leadership was outdated and did not suit the current, ever-evolving contexts (Nesbit, 2012) of secondary schools. This experience may be supported by the suggestion that a knowledge of policies and operational models is becoming less useful for leaders because of the decreasing frequency of repeated situations. The leaders' formal learning may have occurred in a different time, and therefore, lacked applicability (Horner, 1997; Regine & Lewin, 2000).

For teachers and middle leaders coping with diverse range of responsibilities and expectations, stability of organisational structures becomes an important factor in maintaining efficiency. Lyn and Jess had experienced changes in organisational structures at their schools in swift succession. Both felt that when they became accustomed to the changes the first time, they were facing another set of changes. Max felt challenged by the uncertainty of student numbers because it was difficult to plan courses without knowing how many classes they would have.

Ann's school culture reinforced a top- down hierarchy because of the perceived disconnection between the Principal and the department. Consequently, much of the original message could be lost or diluted by passing through several layers of bureaucracy. The delay also meant that the department had less time to regroup and decide on their next course of action. Max recognised the danger in blindly accepting the status quo. He spoke of the need to review and refine, be alert to the changing needs of the students, and be agile enough to modify curriculum delivery and assessment as and when

required. Communication was identified as a crucial factor to maintain a continual flow of co-operative actions (Stacey et al., 2000).

Ann's experience of instability also stemmed from poor communication from the senior leadership. She felt middle leaders at her school were uncertain about the messages they received through intermediaries. These uncertainties often made teachers defensive and less co-operative than they might have been. This could be because swift and frequent changes added to their workload. Shortage of specialist teaching staff and the resulting large class sizes were another area of concern for Ann, whose subject department had almost all teachers teaching more than one subject. The quality of personalised learning programmes was being affected by the size of the learning groups. While the department was co-operating to deliver the learning outcomes, the situation was less than ideal.

Moving on to organisational practices and structures that are perceived to be helpful in direction forming, all participants spoke of collaboration and frequent professional interactions. It was in these situations that leadership emerged as teachers undertook more unambiguous responsibilities for departmental functions. All participants saw informal, professional interactions leading into a productive and collaborative work environment where team members felt safe to share ideas and offer criticism. This supports the process ontology of the study that considers direction forming as an ongoing activity. Through dialogue opportunities for other regenerative activities may arise as teams continue to create, criticise, and refine (Carroll & Simpson, 2012; Hibbert et al., 2017). Conversation may also be regarded as "an instrument of organisational action" (Taylor & Robichaud, 2004, p. 397). Some factors that supported the generation of this team environment conducive for spontaneous professional conversation were identified to be access to a shared workspace, common non-contact periods, an expectation to informally gather as a group either before or after school hours, teaching in classrooms situated close together, celebrating success, and creating opportunities to share food. Taking these into account, departments seemed to recognise the importance of developing and maintaining a collegial and welcoming environment at the workplace. Ann had even begun to

calendarise departmental socialising over a shared lunch to promote a sense of shared departmental purpose.

Jess explained, increased teacher autonomy was a naturally occurring reward for these voluntary actions. Besides acknowledging and praising teacher contributions, Jess did not have any other way to reward teachers. Creating the opportunity for teachers to have more autonomy in the way departmental functions such as curriculum delivery and professional learning was seen as a reward because of the decision-making involved therein. In Peta's department, teachers were taking on responsibilities for departmental functions as part of their ongoing professional development. According to Peta, they saw their reward in being able to state the experience on their professional resume. Therefore, it could be said that the processes for direction forming created opportunities for the emergence of leadership in a subject department.

Max and Ann attached much importance to "open", "spontaneous" conversations in forming and reforming direction for the department. This indicates a possible assumption of an environment of mutual trust. Max and Ann assume that all teachers in their departments are able to freely express themselves without any anxiety about resulting consequences. While it affirms the need for trust within the department, there is no mention of how this assumption is checked or evidenced.

In a slightly different approach to the idea of trust, Peta assumed that all the teachers in her department agree with her vision. When asked for evidence of this, she said that they talk about it and if someone wants to do something different, they have to convince her. This could be interpreted as creating an environment that discourages dissenting voices. Teachers may be discouraged by the thought of having to spend energy on an exercise that closely resembles conflict with a positional superior. The power balance in the situation may favour the positional leader. However, it is to be noted that Peta was able to provide some evidence of collegial trust by talking about the times when she shared examples of her own disappointments with her department. The extent to which teachers in Peta's

department are able to play a role in direction forming, when it is already “decided” by her, is unclear. As a positional leader, Peta may be seen to follow the principle of “decide how to decide” (Roberto, 2013). Perhaps, she is already actively “shaping and influencing the conditions under which people interact and deliberate” (p.30). Some further exploration of the idea of trust in team environments is discussed in Chapter Six of the thesis.

The context of each participant’s experience of direction forming was reflected in their accounts. For instance, Max’s school had a large transient population, which made them feel they were constantly in a state of flux. The department members could not predict how many classes they would have at any given level the following year. The uncertainty impacted staff wellbeing and some perceived preparing new resources and lessons as additional workload. Peta’s department did not stream students, yet still ended up with a predominantly lower ability class as a result of timetabling for other subject departments that streamed their students. Peta was frustrated by the negative impact of streaming on the department’s planned destination. All these examples seem to illustrate the idea of an organisation comprising several interdependent parts (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). What happens in one area, impacts several others.

Lyn, Jess and Peta found it difficult to develop and trust their own leadership potential and there was a sense of powerlessness as they felt they had no capacity to influence the overall direction for their department. The collaborative work culture (Stoll & Fink, 1996) they sought to establish within their departments always seemed out of reach. They felt that there was no room for any recognisable leadership to emerge in the absence of a supportive environment echoing Alvesson (2017) in that leadership does not exist in isolation.

Direction forming for a subject department was described as a dynamic, rather than a static, phenomenon by both Max and Ann even though the motivating factors were slightly different. While both participants identified “purpose” as the guiding factor, in Max’s case, the purpose arose from an

internal aim; “improvement for all”. For Ann, the purpose was set by the senior leadership team of the organisation. Ann’s department agreed with the purpose and set about forming and re-forming direction accordingly. For both participants, uncertainty and constant change was a part of everyday reality. They spoke of dynamic developmental processes as naturally occurring functions within the department. For instance, Max made some alterations in the programme outline in consultation with his colleagues in order to improve opportunities for learners who were struggling to achieve through the existing course. Ann spoke of “a moveable feast” that was modified according to the needs of the learners. The department had to be innovative and agile. The social connectedness of the team meant that the innovation development was an interactive process drawing on the skills of several members (Widmann et al., 2016). In both cases, the active involvement of several members of the department meant that the innovations benefited the students as well as the teachers because it created more efficient departmental processes.

Speaking of conflicts that challenge a smooth execution of departmental functions, participants mostly spoke of conflicting personalities and visions within subject departments and across the school. This seems to suggest that in the absence of a shared vision, much energy is wasted in unproductive and demoralising interactions. Using a sporting analogy, Peta described it as people wanting to play roles that cannot logically exist in a particular discipline. For instance, Peta said, “one cannot be an oarsman on a rugby team”. Ann also spoke of her experience with people who would not interact in positive ways with the rest of the team, and how she had to spend considerable time and effort in aligning their actions with the department’s vision. Some insight into the nature of team development through a creating a common vision is provided through a systematic review of professional literature (Widmann et al., 2016), where team reflection is recognised as a tool to align disparate goals and values. Professional literature seems to support the existence of ongoing conflicts and disagreements in the practice of educational leadership, describing it as a relationship with others and being a “highly political struggle between practice, theory, and research” (2001, p. 7).

Summary

This chapter has focused on analysing the various aspects of direction forming that emerged from the semi-structured interviews. The last section of the chapter has discussed the interface between organisational structures and leadership practices, acknowledging the possible tension that may exist between the two.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

As a concluding chapter, it aims to synthesise the findings gained through the interviews, and an analysis of the same in the context of the research questions. Besides presenting the conclusions that may be drawn from this research study, the chapter also submits recommendations for further research and implications for leadership training and practice.

Rationale and aims of research study

As explained in Chapter One, the initial idea for this study arose from my personal experiences of direction forming in a subject department as a classroom teacher and positional leader. As I engaged with professional literature it seemed that the processes of direction forming have received less attention than individual leaders' actions and attributes. While there were references to the role of collaboration (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Drew et al., 2016; King, 2004; Timperley, 2014), there was little that delved into the nature of the processes that were involved in this collaboration. During the course of this study, the importance of the role of collaboration was articulated in each interview where participants identified it either as a process, or a strategy to overcome perceived challenges in direction forming. Collaboration seemed to be an ongoing, spontaneous process through which participants experienced collective agency and empowerment.

Seeking to extend understandings of direction forming, a process ontology seemed the best fit for the purpose. It was expected that a study of the processes might also aid in the recognition of emergent leadership as a form of leadership, thus encouraging the production of novel approaches to educational leadership studies and practice. While speaking of the emergence of leadership, it is important to remain cognisant of the context of this emergence; what does it emerge from, thus drawing attention to the significance of processes such as professional interactions. Besides, there was a possibility that the study would enhance understandings of leadership practices. Looking back on the study, the use of a process ontology drew attention to the interface of organisational structures and socio-cultural factors that reflected both relational trust and structural dependency (Bryk &

Schneider, 2002). In doing so, the ontology helped to show that leadership is based on relationships (Kouzes & Posner, 2012) and is a practice more than a position (Raelin, 2016). A process perspective also matched the continually forming and re-forming nature of the actions required to implement departmental functions.

As a practising Head of Faculty in a New Zealand secondary school, I experience the importance of managing the co-evolutionary dynamics (McKelvey, 2002) that are constantly shifting and impacting the way departmental functions are completed. Since it is highly unlikely for any given system to “encompass every eventuality”(Stacey et al., 2000, p. 186), the study sought to focus on the ongoing actions of forming and organising. Reflecting back on the study, the findings have added to the understandings of processes by highlighting the importance of ongoing spontaneous professional interactions that “perpetually reconstruct the future”(Stacey et al., 2000, p. 184). These participatory processes secure a personal sense of ownership. They may be experienced as empowering because they could be perceived as expressions of confidence in their individual capacity, and foster opportunities to participate in decision-making (Conger, 1989; Neilsen, 1986; Strauss, 1977).

Course of action to address research aims

Once the rationale and aims of the study had been established, the following questions were constructed to meet the research aims:

1. What are teachers' understandings of how direction forms and reforms within their subject department?
2. How do teachers associate direction forming and reforming with key departmental leadership functions?
3. What strategies do teachers use to address challenges with departmental direction forming?

While selecting a suitable methodology, social constructionism was considered suitable since subject departments are social groups. Research participants shared their sense-making of professional

experiences through their accounts. Each account was an interpretation for to describe is to give one's own perspective on the experience. Here it was important to remember that usually discrepancies arise between the experience and its understanding, and that not all nuances of an experience will be included in the resulting description (Adams & Van Manen, 2017). At this stage, it was helpful to consider the possibility of some underlying elements (See Appendix H) that may not have been clearly articulated during the interviews.

Main findings

One of the main findings of this study was that direction forming within a subject department does not replace hierarchies. Pay hierarchies are set out in the Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement⁹ whereby Management Units¹⁰ are awarded to those in positional leadership roles. The influence of top-down positional leadership and authority was strongly felt at the level of individual departments, and further by classroom teachers. Subject departments found themselves constantly involved in finding better ways to align with the goals set for them. Shifts and changes in the higher levels of positional leadership as well as within the department necessitated ongoing interactions to adjust. When Gibb (1958) described leadership as "a part of the problem-solving machinery of groups"(p.103) and concurred with Thelen's (1954) view of leadership as a set of functions through which the group aligns the industry of individuals to achieve a mutually desirable outcome, it was in recognition of the significance of aligning with the organisational goals.

Direction forming and reforming could thus be characterised by actions, interactions, and reactions that are necessary to maintain alignment with organisational goals. Research participants in designated positions of leadership were cognisant of the constant pressure to align and complete actions that were seen to directly feed into the school's strategic plan for any given time of the year.

⁹ This document provides the terms and conditions of employment for teachers in state and state integrated secondary schools in New Zealand.

¹⁰ Boards can allocate units as a permanent or fixed-term addition to a teacher's salary. Each unit is worth \$4,000pa (at the time of writing this thesis).

These views concur with the functional approach that regards leadership in terms of ensuring a constructive environment that supports the group to produce outcomes (Benne & Sheats, 1948). By placing the onus of outcomes or results on the group, Benne and Sheats (1948) recognise leadership as a group construct. However, there was little recognition of leadership being a group construct among the participants of this study.

Overall, subject departments were seen to be operating as compliant units within an organisation, and were not involved in designing structures and goals. Leadership processes such as collaborating to create new programmes for curriculum delivery and mentoring aimed to meet the organisational goal, and the positional leaders' actions held more credence than the everyday leadership practices of classroom teachers. There was some recognition of collective agency as participants spoke of collaboration, but there was little evidence that participants recognised teacher agency as a factor in forming the direction of the department. In the pursuit of compliance, most processes and strategies being formed were responsive rather than being proactive. Participants were constantly facing change and adjusting their behaviours accordingly, illustrating the claim that leadership "is a relationship, highly political and is a struggle between practice, theory and research"(Gunter, 2001, p. 7).

The interpretive approach was also used in the analysis of the participants' accounts. Since the "harmony of all the details with the whole is the criterion of correct understanding" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 302), the research context was taken into consideration while interpreting the accounts. At the time of analysing the interview transcripts, it seemed interpreting would be a fairly straightforward activity. However, reflecting on the material after a few weeks brought up some questions that could be better answered by periods of observation, or having access to the departmental artefacts. For example, Jess and Peta were certain about the autonomy and opportunities within their departments. It might have helped to observe this in action. Also, it was surprising to note that individuals showed very little awareness of their own agency in determining how departmental functions were completed, and how they were being pro-active in contributing to the organisational goals. This was surprising

because it seemed contrary to the belief that human interactions are continually about “forming intentions, choosing and acting in relation to each other as they go about their daily work”(Stacey et al., 2000, p. 187). Though there were indications of conjoint agency where individual agents were influencing one another (Gronn, 2002) to contribute to departmental direction forming, participants did not seem to recognise emergent leadership as a form of leadership. Relating it to my own experience as a middle leader in a secondary school led me to believe that it is the frenetic pace of the academic year that leaves no time for deep reflection about one’s own role in the larger organisation.

While describing strategies they used to overcome perceived barriers to direction-forming, participants in this study seemed to be part of a dynamic, uncertain environment where they were interdependent on each other as well as organisational structures. Trust and goodwill would be crucial for this environment to remain conducive to positive actions, yet it was not clear how this was being fostered in the workplace. Perhaps, teachers are so “committed to the value of education”(Kristinsson, 2014, p. 15) that they generate goodwill in the workplace by their professionalism, and remaining focused on the “priorities internal to the work”(Kristinsson, 2014, p. 16).

Strengths and limitations of the study

The purpose and aim of this study was also its greatest strength for it sought to extend understandings of processes. The findings of the study are expected to be of relevance to classroom teachers, middle leaders, senior leadership teams, and those involved in teacher training and leadership development. Not only did it address a possible gap about processes of direction-forming in literature, but also closely reflected the position of secondary school subject departments within the larger organisation, highlighting the significance of positive relationships at work.

The literature selected for the study was sourced from the fields of general leadership, educational leadership, and team leadership studies. This wide range of reference helped reflect the complexity

of secondary school environments for teachers and middle leaders. Examining the findings against the backdrop of leadership constructs described in general leadership studies was helpful because the research participants' understandings were often formed by these constructs and the expectations therein. By reflecting on their current understandings of direction forming, participants were reminded to examine their own agency, or the lack thereof. Literature recognises that usually it is not only the individual teacher's capacity that determines teacher agency, but also the availability of a range of resources that may be "cultural, relational and material"(Drew et al., 2016, p. 97). This was borne out to some extent in the teachers' accounts for they all expressed having experienced the pressure of performativity, echoing findings that mandated student outcomes negate the positive effects of teacher agency(Biesta, 2004). Additionally, it helped to examine practices and structures that were identified as being supportive or perceived to be barriers to direction forming. Teachers' accounts suggested that the micro-politics of the organisation played an important role in determining the extent to which they could enact their collective agency. Perhaps, a case study method would be useful in assessing the validity of this belief.

The study was limited to gathering data from a small sample size using only one method. Each participant was interviewed once for the period of about an hour. This was necessary considering the scope of the study did not allow for longer periods of observation. Only Auckland-based secondary schools were included in the study, and those in the geographical proximity of where I live and work were selected for contact.

The research design made no provision for creating a gender balance among participants. This was because all participants were expected to share accounts of their personal experience and gender was not considered to be a factor that might influence perspectives on processes of direction forming. Only one male participant could be recruited to participate in this study.

Implications for future practice

The findings of the study may find applications in educational leadership and team leadership training. Teachers' accounts highlight the importance of collaboration and trust in a subject department. Collective agency thrives in an environment of trust, and relationships based on trust (Tschannen- Moran, 2009) are usually the most stable and productive in the workplace. Therefore training on leadership processes that cultivate trust among the team could have a place in leadership training programmes. Additionally, including training in change management would assist future leaders to minimise anxiety and generate trust. Furthermore, in education "leadership is not located in job descriptions but in the professionalism of working for teaching and learning" (Gunter, 2001, p. 7). Recognising emergent leadership as a form of leadership might bolster the professionalism of the work undertaken by teachers.

Onsite professional learning sessions could include training in reflection and the development of emotional intelligence among teachers as well as middle leaders. This training could either be individually tailored according to a person's skills and abilities, or be process-based to include the whole team, or be a combination of both. Each of these alternatives would have its own strengths and drawbacks, not to forget the logistical issues such as observing interactions in a team environment for extended periods of time, and ensuring that the team members are drawn from different levels of the organisational structure. The emotional perceptions of others may usually be the focus of emotional intelligence training programmes, while self-concept and self-management may be overlooked (Khon, Kim, & Aidossova, 2016). The time spent on these aspects could be an empowering exercise for teachers who may not have recognised their own individual agency yet.

In particular, the findings of this study may resonate closely with middle leaders in New Zealand secondary schools. Bearing the pressure of performativity from senior leadership, as well as the onus of supporting the well-being of teachers in their departments, middle leaders often lack time for deep reflection. It is hoped that teachers' accounts in this study will help in identifying some common

occurrences across the sector that cause frustration and conflict, and help focus time and energy on building and maintaining professional relationships so crucial for direction forming. Another way middle leaders may benefit is by recognising the importance of individual agency in themselves as well as the teachers, thus paving the way for leadership to emerge across the group.

Recommendations

A deeper analysis of the role of the school vision in direction forming for a subject department brought to light its connection with the practice of reflection and self-review. Ann, Lyn, and Jess referred to using the school vision, goals and strategic plans as the rubric for checking their own practices as positional leaders. As valuable as the self-review may be, it was not being shared with their peers or senior leaders. The absence of critical dialogue may therefore obscure opportunities for self-improvement. Having visual displays of the school vision and goals helped inform all departmental functions, and department meetings often focused on the specific actions that were being taken to align with these. However, there was no mention of teacher and middle leader voice being gathered and fed back to senior leadership to inform future planning. This is worth considering because while departments may be constantly engaged in forming and re-forming direction in order to align with the school vision, the alignment may be smoother and more effective if the school vision were to be informed by their experiences. Processes of compliance and direction-forming for subject departments need not be mutually exclusive.

Repeated references to the impact of positional leaders' actions and interactions would suggest that they have an impact on the processes of direction forming in subject departments. As a result of the attitude of the Principal, Max felt empowered, while Lyn, Jess and Peta experienced frustration. Ann did not have any outstandingly negative or positive experience, but did mention how sometimes the Heads of subject departments felt quite isolated and neglected. Considering the small size of this study, it would be wrong to generalise. However, there seems to be adequate reason to recommend a closer look at the interactions between senior, middle, and classroom leaders. It may be possible to

avert conflicts that are, according to Max and Peta, “a waste of energy”, “demoralising” for Lyn, and cause much frustration for all participants.

Literature on group processes of leadership suggests that building the capacity to lead across all levels of organisational structure is crucial to the strength and effectiveness of the organisation (Amagoh, 2009; Kouzes & Posner, 2009; McCauley & Douglas, 2004). A heightened understanding of the processes may also strengthen middle leadership practice and “subject departments may become powerful agents in influencing workplace conditions as well as educational quality and teacher development” (Visscher & Witziers, 2004, p. 4). It would also be valuable to revisit the question fielded by Hackman and Wageman about how models of leadership may be restructured so that all members act as both leaders and followers (Hackman & Wageman, 2007). Perhaps, opportunities to practice and participate in leadership actions would best be embedded in the organisational structure. Such leadership opportunities were most commonly available to subject departments through situations related to the delivery and assessment of the curriculum, as long as the innovations remained within the confines of the structure determined by the senior leadership of the school.

Max and Ann attached much importance to “open”, “spontaneous” conversations in forming and reforming direction for the department. This indicates a possible assumption of an environment of mutual trust. Max and Ann assume that all teachers in their departments are able to freely express themselves without any anxiety about resulting consequences. While it affirms the need for trust within the department, there is no mention of how this assumption is checked or evidenced. It might be worth considering the teachers’ motivations in this respect. Left unchecked, the assumption of an all-pervasive trust may remain a blinkered view of reality. Merely stating that something is, does not bring it into being. The existence of an abstract construct may not be simple to evidence, but it is necessary. Otherwise, it is just wishful thinking. Perhaps, strategies such as gathering teacher voice could be helpful in this respect.

As a positional leader, Peta may be seen to follow the principle of “decide how to decide” (Roberto, 2013). Perhaps, she is already actively “shaping and influencing the conditions under which people interact and deliberate” (p.30). It was not clear whether the shape of these conditions was informed by teacher voice. Some further exploration of the positioning of power in such situations is recommended.

Conversation, informal socialising over food and collaborating were identified as common processes by which the group formed direction by both male and female participants. However, speaking of barriers to direction forming, dissent within the subject department was clearly identified by only the male participant while three female participants spoke of personality clashes. All subject departments that participated in the study had more female members than male. These factors seem to indicate that the role of gender in direction forming for a subject department may need further examination.

It might also be important to check teachers’ understandings of collaboration within the department because there seems to be room for co-operation and social connections to masquerade as collaboration. It has been pointed out that strong social connections among team members sometimes hinder expression of differing opinions (Sethi et al., 2002). Besides, an examination of the factors that ensure equity in the collaborative environment may also deserve some closer attention to check whether it empowers productive behaviours in a team.

Summary

The final chapter has reiterated the rationale, aims, questions, and the design of the research. Besides presenting the findings, the chapter includes a brief outline of the perceived strengths and limitations of the study, the implications of the findings for leadership practice and training, and recommendations for areas that might benefit from further research.

Completing this research study has brought the organisational complexity of secondary schools in New Zealand into sharper focus for me as I stepped away to engage with professional literature and

research participants, and then returned to synthesise and draw my conclusions. It has also strengthened my belief in the importance of being proactive in building and maintaining positive relationships at all levels in the organisational structure. Additionally, I believe that engaging in a systematic research process has expanded my repertoire of skills related to eliciting the best from a team. It has been an empowering experience as it has shown me ways to manage energy, first in myself and then in my team (Clawson, 2010).

References

- Abrantes, A., Passos, A. M., Cunha, M., & Santos, C. M. (2018). Bringing team improvisation to team adaptation: The combined role of shared temporal cognitions and team learning behaviors fostering team performance. *Journal of Business Research*, 84, 59-71.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.11.005>
- Adams, C., & Van Manen, M. (2017). Teaching phenomenological research and writing. *Qualitative Health Research*, 27(6), 780-791. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732317698960>
- Alvesson, M. (2017). Waiting for Godot: Eight major problems in the odd field of leadership studies. *Leadership*, 0(0), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715017736707>
- Alvesson, M., & Spicer, A. (2014a). Critical perspectives on leadership. In D. V. Day (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of leadership and organisations* (pp. 40-56). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Alvesson, M., & Spicer, A. (2014b). Critical perspectives on leadership. In D.V.Day (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Leadership and Organisations* (pp. 40-56). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Amagoh, F. (2009). Leadership development and leadership effectiveness. *Management Decision*, 47(6), 989-999. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1108/0025174091>
- Anderson, N., Potočnik, K., & Zhou, J. (2014). Innovation and creativity in organizations: A state-of-the-science review, prospective commentary, and guiding framework. *Journal of Management*, 40(5), 1297-1333. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206314527128>
- Avolio, B. (2007). Promoting more integrative strategies for leadership theory-building. *American Psychologist*, 62(1), 25-33. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.62.1.25>
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York, NY: W.H.Freeman.
- Barker, R. A. (1997). How can we train leaders if we do not know what leadership is? *Human Relations*, 50(4), 343-362. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1016950726862>
- Barker, R. A. (2001). The nature of leadership. *Human Relations*, 54(4), 469-494.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726701544004>
- Bartol, K. M., & Zhang, X. (2007). Networks and leadership development: Building linkages for capacity acquisition and capital accrual. *Human Resource Management Review*, 17(4), 388-401. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2007.08.004>
- Benne, K. D., & Sheats, P. (1948). Functional roles of group members. *Journal of Social Issues*, 4(2), 41-49.
- Bennett, N., Woods, P., Wise, C., & Newton, W. (2007). Understandings of middle leadership in secondary schools: A review of empirical research. *School Leadership and Management*, 27(5), 453-470. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632430701606137>
- Berger, P. L., & Luckman, T. (1967). *The social construction of reality : A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Bernard, L. L. (1926). *An introduction to social psychology*. New York: Holt.
- Biesta, G. J. J. (2004). Education, accountability, and the ethical demand: Can the democratic potential of accountability be regained? *Educational Theory*, 54, 233-250.
- Blake, R. R., Shepard, H. A., & Mouton, J. S. (1964). *Managing intergroup conflict in industry*. Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Co.
- Blom, M., & Alvesson, M. (2015). All-inclusive and all good: The hegemonic ambiguity of leadership. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 31(4), 480-492.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scaman.2015.08.001>
- Borgatta, E. F., Bales, R. F., & Couch, A. S. (1954). Some findings relevant to the great man theory of leadership. *American Sociological Review*(6), 755- 759.
- Branson, C. M. (2007). Improving leadership by nurturing moral consciousness through structured self reflection. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 45(4), 471-495.

- Branson, C. M., & Gross, S. J. (2014). *Handbook of ethical educational leadership*. New York, NY: Routledge. Retrieved from
<http://ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/login?url=http://site.ebrary.com/lib/aut/docDetail.action?docID=10869852>
- Brien, J. (2017). *Stitching lives together: Developing an understanding of Pakeha teachers' practice, pedagogy and philosophy in culturally responsive secondary classrooms*. University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand. Retrieved from
<http://hdl.handle.net/2292/32594>
- Brinkmann, S. (2018). The Interview. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (5th ed., pp. 576-599): Sage Publications Inc.
- Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bryk, A. S., & Schneider, B. (2002). *Trust in schools: A core resource for improvement*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Burrell, G., & Morgan, G. (1979). *Sociological paradigms and organisational analysis*. Retrieved from
http://sonify.psych.gatech.edu/~ben/references/burrell_sociological_paradigms_and_organisational_analysis.pdf
- Bush, T. (2010). *Theories of educational leadership and management* (4th ed.): Sage Publications. Retrieved from https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=6f6UM7_vKCMC
- Calás, M. B., & Smircich, L. (1991). Voicing seduction to silence leadership. *Organization Studies*, 12(4), 567-601. <https://doi.org/10.1177/017084069101200406>
- Caldwell, R. (2003). Successful learning and the globalisation of learning. In P. Hallinger (Ed.), *Reshaping the landscape of school leadership development: A global perspective* (pp. 23-40). Lisse, The Netherlands: Swets & Zeitlinger.
- Carroll, B., & Simpson, B. (2012). Capturing sociality in the movement between frames: An illustration from leadership development. *Human Relations*, 65(10), 1283-1309.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726712451185>
- Carson, D., Gilmore, A., Perry, C., & Gronhaug, K. (2001). *Qualitative marketing research*. London: Sage.
- Chia, R. (1997). Essai: Thirty years on: From organizational structures to the organization of thought. *Organisation Studies*, 18(4), 685-707.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/017084069701800406>
- Clawson, J. G. (2010). *Level three leadership - Getting below the surface* (Fourth ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc.
- Cohen, J., McCabe, E. M., Michelli, N. M., & Pickeral, T. (2009). School climate: Research, policy, teacher education and practice. *Teachers College Record*, 111(1), 180-213.
- Collinson, D. (2006). Rethinking followership: A post-structuralist analysis of follower identities. *Leadership Quarterly*, 17(2), 179-189. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lequa.2005.12.005>
- Conger, J. A. (1989). Leadership: The art of empowering others. *Academy of Management Executive*, 33, 17-24.
- Corbin, J., Strauss, A., & Strauss, A. L. (2014). *Basics of qualitative research* (4th ed.). San Jose University, USA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2017). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Toronto, CA: Sage.
- Crevani, L. (2018). Is there leadership in a fluid world? Exploring the ongoing production of direction in organising. *Leadership*, 14(1), 83-109.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715015616667>
- Cunliffe, A. L., & Eriksen, M. (2011). Relational leadership. *Human Relations*, 64(1), 1425-1449.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726711418388>

- Day, D. V., Gronn, P., & Salas, E. (2004). Leadership capacity in teams. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 15, 857-880. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lequa.2004.09.001>
- Denis, J. L., Langley, A., & Rouleau, L. (2010). The practice of leadership in the messy world of organizations. *Leadership*, 6(1), 67-88. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715009354233>
- DeRue, D. S., & Ashford, S. J. (2010). Who will lead and who will follow? A social process of leadership identity construction in organisations. *Academy of Management Review*, 35(4), 627-647.
- Dinh, J. E., Lord, R. G., Gardner, W. L., Meuser, J. D., Liden, R. C., & Hu, J. (2014). Leadership theory and research in the new millennium: Current theoretical trends and changing perspectives. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 25(1), 36-62. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lequa.2013.11.005>
- Dong, Y., Bartol, K. M., Zhang, Z., & Li, C. (2017). Enhancing employee creativity via individual skill development and team knowledge sharing: Influences of dual-focused transformational leadership. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 38(3), 439-458. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2134>
- Drath, W. H., McCauley, C. D., Palus, C. J., Van Valsor, E., O'Connor, P. M. G., & McGuire, J. B. (2008). Direction, alignment, commitment: Toward a more integrative ontology of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 19, 635-653. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lequa.2008.09.003>
- Drath, W. H., & Palus, C. J. (1994). *Making common sense: Leadership as meaning-making in a community of practice*. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.
- Drew, V., Priestley, M., & Michael, M. (2016). Curriculum development through critical collaborative professional enquiry. *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, 1(1), 92-106.
- Duignan, P. (2012). Authentic leaders use the power of presence, authentic relationships, and influence fields. In *Educational leadership: together creating ethical learning environments* (2nd ed., pp. 139-163). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Education Council. (2017a). *Our Code, Our Standards*. Retrieved from <https://educationcouncil.org.nz/sites/default/files/Our%20Code%20Our%20Standards%20web%20booklet%20FINAL.pdf>
- Education Council. (2017b). Standards for the teaching profession - Overview.
- Fiedler, F. E. (1967). *A theory of leadership effectiveness*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (2008). The interview: From neutral stance to political involvement. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (3rd ed ed.). London: SAGE. Retrieved from https://bb.vle.keele.ac.uk/bbcswebdav/xid-1925292_1
- Friedrich, T. L., Griffith, J. A., & Mumford, M. D. (2015). Collective leadership behaviors: Evaluating the leader, team network, and problem situation characteristics that influence their use. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 27(2016), 312-333. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lequa.2016.02.004>
- Gadamer, H. G. (2004). *Truth and method* (2nd ed.). London: Sheed and Ward Stagbooks.
- Gardner, J. W. (1990). The nature of leadership. In *The Jossey-Bass reader on educational leadership* (First ed., pp. 3-12). San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass Inc.
- Gemmill, G., & Oakley, J. (1992). Leadership: An alienating social myth? *Human Relations*, 45(2), 113-130.
- Gibb, C. A. (1949). Talent for leadership. *The Australian Quarterly*(4), 73-84. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20633206>
- Gibb, C. A. (1950). The sociometry of leadership in temporary groups. *Sociometry*(3), 226. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2785459>
- Gibb, C. A. (1958). An interactional view of the emergence of leadership. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 10(1), 101-110.

- Griffin, D. (2002). The emergence of leadership: Linking self-organisation and ethics. In R. D. Stacey, D. Griffin, & P. Shaw (Eds.), *Complexity and emergence in organisations*. London: Routledge.
- Grint, K. (2010). *Leadership - A very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Grint, K., Jones, O. S., & Holt, C. (2016). What is leadership? Person, result, position, purpose, process, or all or none of these? In J. Storey, J. Hartley, J. L. Dena, P. Hart, & D. Ulrich (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to leadership* (pp. 3-20). Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/AUT/detail.action?docID=4684229>
- Gronn, P. (2002). Distributed leadership as a unit of analysis. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 13(4), 423-451. [https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843\(02\)00120-0](https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843(02)00120-0)
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed ed., pp. 191-215). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Gunter, H. (2001). *Leaders and leadership in education*. London:UK: Paul Chapman.
- Gunter, H., Hall, D., & Bragg, J. (2013). Distributed leadership: A study in knowledge production. <https://doi.org/DOI>: 10.1177/1741143213488586
- Hackman, J. R., & Wageman, R. (2007). Asking the right questions about leadership: Discussion and conclusions. *American Psychologist*, 62(1), 43-47. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.62.1.43>
- Harrell, M. C., & Bradley, M. A. (2009). *Data collection methods: Semi-structured interviews and focus groups*. Retrieved from https://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR718.html
- Harris, A. (2003). Teacher leadership as distributed leadership: Heresy, fantasy or possibility? *School Leadership & Management*, 23(3), 313-324. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1363243032000112801>
- Hatch, M. J., & Cunliffe, A. L. (2006). *Organization Theory: Modern, symbolic, and post-modern perspectives*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Hatchimonji, D. R., Linsky, A. V., DeMarchena, S., Nayman, S. J., Kim, S., & Elias, M. J. (2018). Building a culture of engagement through participatory feedback processes. *Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 91(2), 59-65.
- Hibbert, P., Beech, N., & Siedlock, F. (2017). Leadership formation: Interpreting experience. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 16(4), 603-622. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2015.0243>
- Hibbert, P., & Huxham, C. (2010). The past in play: Tradition in the structures of collaboration. *Organisation Studies*, 31(5), 525-554. <https://doi.org/doi/pdf/10.1177/0170840610372203>
- Hooker, T. (2013). Peer coaching: A review of the literature. *Waikato Journal of Education*, 18(2), 129-139.
- Horner, M. (1997). Leadership theory: past, present and future. *Team Performance Management*, 3(4), 270-287.
- Houglum, D. T. (2012). Myth-Busters: Traditional and emergent leadership. *Emergence: Complexity & Organization*, 14(2), 25-39.
- House, R. J., & Mitchell, R. R. (1974). *Journal of Contemporary Business*, 3(4), 81-98.
- Hudson, L. A., & Ozanne, J. L. (1988). Alternative ways of seeking knowledge in consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14(4), 508-520.
- Hudson, M. (2010). *Te ara tika : guidelines for Māori research ethics : a framework for researchers and ethics committee members* [Electronic document]: [Auckland, N.Z.] : Health Research Council of New Zealand on behalf of the Pūtaiora Writing Group, [2010]. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/login?url=http://www.hrc.govt.nz/assets/pdfs/publications/Te%20Ar%20Tika%20R21Jul10.pdf>
- Johnson, M. (2000). *Reliability and validity of the leadership self-Efficacy scale*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University.

- Johnson, S. M. (1996). Looking for leaders. In *The Jossey-Bass reader on educational leadership* (pp. 73-96). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc.
- Kaufmann, S. A. (1993). *The origins of order*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kayes, D. C., & Burnett, G. (2006). *Team Learning in Organizations: A Review and Integration* presented at the meeting of the OLKC 2006 Conference University of Warwick, Coventry
- Khon, N., Kim, A., & Aidossova, Z. (2016). *Problem solving design for emotional intelligence training of middle managers*. presented at the meeting of the 7th International Conference on Education and Educational Psychology, Retrieved from https://www.futureacademy.org.uk/files/images/upload/71_5094_fulltext.pdf
- King, M. B. (2004). School and district-level leadership for teacher workforce development: Enhancing teacher learning and capacity. *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, 103(1), 303-325.
- Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice*, 24(1), 120-124. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375092>
- Kotter, J. P. (1988). *The Leadership Factor*. NY: The Free Press.
- Kouzes, J., & Posner, B. (2009). Kouzes and Posner's transformational leadership model in practice: The case of Jordanian schools *Journal of Leadership Education*, 7(3), 265-280. <https://doi.org/https://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/10.1108/01437730810916613>
- Kouzes, J., & Posner, B. (2012). *The leadership challenge* (5th ed.). San Francisco: CA: Jossey Bass.
- Kristinsson, S. (2014). The essence of professionalism. In C. Branson & S. J. Gross (Eds.), *Handbook of ethical educational leadership* (pp. 11-23). New York: Routledge.
- Küpers, W. (2007). Perspectives on integrating leadership and followership. *International Journal of Leadership Studies*, 2(3), 194-221.
- Larsson, M., & Lundholm, S. E. (2013). Talking work in a bank: A study of organizing properties of leadership in work interactions. *Human Relations*, 66(8), 1101-1129. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726712465452>
- Latour, B. (2000). When things strike back: A possible contribution of "science studies" to the social sciences. *British Journal of Sociology*(51), 107-123. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-4446.2000.00107.x>
- Leithwood, K., Begley, P. T., & Cousins, J. B. (1994). *Developing expert leaders for future schools*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Lichtenstein, B. B., Uhl-Bien, M., Marion, R., Seers, A., Orton, J. D., & Schreiber, C. (2007). Complexity leadership theory: An interactive perspective on leading in complex adaptive systems. In J. K. Hazy, J. A. Goldstein, & B. B. Lichtenstein (Eds.), *Complex systems leadership theory: New perspectives from complexity science on social and organisational effectiveness*: ISCE Publishing.
- Louis, K. S., Leithwood, K., Wahlstrom, K. L., & Anderson, S. E. (2010). *Learning from leadership: Investigating the links to improved student learning*. New York, NY: The Wallace Foundation. Retrieved from <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Investigating-the-Links-to-Improved-Student-Learning-Executive-Summary.pdf>
- Maccoby, E. E., & Maccoby, N. (1954). The interview: A tool of social science. In G. Lindzey (Ed.), *Handbook of social psychology* (pp. 449-487). Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- McCauley, C. D., & Douglas, C. (2004). *The Center for Creative Leadership Handbook Leadership Development* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- McGregor, C. (2013). *Aboriginal inquiry: Lifting all learners, an impact assessment of the aboriginal enhancement school network (AESN)*.
- McKelvey, B. (2002). *Managing coevolutionary dynamics*. presented at the meeting of the 18th EGOS Conference, Barcelona, Spain. Retrieved from <http://www.billmckelvey.org/documents/Managing%20Coevolutionary.pdf>

- McLaughlin, M. W., & Talbert, J. E. (2010). Professional learning communities: Building blocks for school culture and student learning. *VUE*(Spring), 35-45.
- Meindl, J. R., Ehrlich, S. B., & Dukerich, J. M. (1985). The Romance of Leadership. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 30(1), 78-102. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2392813>
- Melville, W., & Wallace, J. (2007). Metaphorical duality: High school subject departments as both communities and organizations. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23, 1193-1205. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2006.10.002>
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. London: Sage.
- Ministry of Education. (2007). *The New Zealand curriculum*
- Ministry of Education. (2015). *New Zealand education in 2025*. Wellington
- Misencenko, D., Guenter, H., & Day, D. V. (2017). Am I a leader? Examining leader identity development over time. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 28(5), 605-620. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lequa.2017.01.004>
- Morgeson, F. P., DeRue, D. S., & Karam, E. P. (2010). Leadership in teams: A functional approach to understanding leadership structures and processes. *Journal of Management*, 36(1), 5-39. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206309347376>
- Mutch, C. (2013). *Doing educational research: A practitioner's guise to getting started* (2nd ed.). Wellington, New Zealand: NZCER Press.
- Neilsen, E. (1986). Empowerment strategies: Balancing authority and responsibility. In S. Srivastava (Ed.), *Executive Power* (pp. 78-110). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Nesbit, P. L. (2012). The role of self-reflection, emotional management of feedback, and self-regulation processes in self-directed leadership development. *Human Resource Development Review*, 11(2), 203-226. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484312439196>
- Neuman, W. L. (2000). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (4th ed.). USA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Neuman, W. L. (2014). *Social research methods : Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (7th ed.). Harlow, Essex Pearson. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat05020a&AN=aut.b13429759&site=eds-live>
- Offermann, L. R., & Coats, M. R. (2018). Implicit theories of leadership: Stability and change over two decades. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 29, 513-522. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lequa.2017.12.003>
- Offermann, L. R., Kennedy, J. K., & Wirtz, P. W. (1994). Implicit leadership theories: Content, structure, and generalizability. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 5, 43-58. [https://doi.org/10.1016/1048-9843\(94\)90005-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/1048-9843(94)90005-1)
- Ogawa, R. T., & Bossert, S. T. (2000). Leadership as an organisational quality. In *The Jossey-Bass Reader on educational leadership* (pp. 38-58). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Parker, I. (2005). *Qualitative Psychology: Introducing radical research*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- Parry, K. W., & Bryman, A. (2006). Leading in Organisations. In S. R. Clegg, C. Hardy, T. B. Lawrence, & W. R. Nord, *The Sage Handbook of Organisation Studies* (pp. 447-464): Sage. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781848608030.n15>
- Pearce, C. L., Manz, C. C., & Sims, H. P. (2014). *Share, don't take the lead : leadership lessons from 21 vanguard organizations*. Charlotte, NC Information Age Publishing. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=3315954>
- Pettigrew, A. M. (1992). On studying managerial elites. *Strategic Management Journal*, 13(2 S), 163-182. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.4250130911>
- Pfeffer, J. (1977). The Ambiguity of Leadership. *Academy of Management Review*, 2(1), 104-112. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1977.4409175>
- Phelan, S. (1999). A note on the correspondence between complexity and systems theory. *Systemic Practice & Action Research*, 12(3), 237-246.

- Plowman, D. A., & Duchon, D. (2007). Emergent leadership: Getting beyond heroes and scapegoats In J. K. Hazy, J. A. Goldstein, & B. B. Lichtenstein (Eds.), *Complex Systems Leadership Theory: New Perspectives from Complexity Science on Social and Organizational Effectiveness* (pp. 109-127): ISCE Publishing. .
- Quaglia Institute of Student Aspirations. (2015). *Teacher Voice report*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Quaglia Institute.
- Raelin, J. A. (2016). *Leadership-as-Practice : Theory and Application* [Book]. New York: Routledge. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1163621&site=eds-live>
- Rapley, T. J. (2001). The art(fulness) of open-ended interviewing: Some considerations on analysing interviews. *Qualitative Research*, 1(3), 303-323. <https://doi.org/10.1177/146879410100100303>
- Regine, B., & Lewin, R. (2000). Leading at the edge: How leaders influence complex systems. *Emergence*, 2(2), 5-23. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327000EM0202_02
- Risser, J. (1997). *Hermeneutics and the voice of the other*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Roberto, M. A. (2013). *Managing conflict and consensus: Why great leaders don't take yes for an answer* (2nd ed.). Concordville, PA: Soundview Executive. Retrieved from <http://ptgmedia.pearsoncmg.com/images/9780133095111/samplepages/0133095118.pdf>
- Robertson, J., & Timperley, H. (2011). *Leadership and learning*: Sage. Retrieved from <https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=1AVdBAAAQBAJ>
- Robinson, V., Hohepa, M., & Lloyd, C. (2009). *School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying what works and why Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration (BES)*. Wellington.
- Romberg, T. (1992). Perspectives on scholarship and research methods. In D.Grouws (Ed.), *Handbook of research on mathematics teaching and learning*. New York: Macmillan.
- Schatzki, T. R. (2006). On organizations as they happen. *Organization Studies*, 27(12), 1863-1873. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840606071942>
- Schwandt, D. R. (2008). Individual and collective coevolution: Leadership as emergent social structuring. In M.Uhl-Bien & R.Marion (Eds.), *Complexity Leadership. Part I: Conceptual Foundations* (Vol. Leadership Horizons, pp. 101-127). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Schwandt, T. A. (2000). Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry. In Y. S. L. Norman K. Denzin (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 189 -213). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Seashore-Louis, K. (2015). Linking leadership to learning. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy NordSTEP*, 1(30321). <https://doi.org/10.3402/nstep.v1.30321>
- Sergi, V., Denis, J. L., & Langley, A. (2016). Beyond the hero-leader. In J. Storey, J. Hartley, J.-L. Denis, P. t. Hart, & D. Ulrich (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to leadership*: Routledge. Retrieved from <http://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315739854.ch3>. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315739854>
- Sergiovanni, T. J. (1998). Leadership as pedagogy, capital development and school effectiveness. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 1(1), 37-46. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360312980010104>
- Sethi, R., Smith, D. C., & Park, C. W. (2002, August). How to kill a team's creativity. *Harvard Business Review*(F0208B), 16-17.
- Sheard, A. G., & Kakabadse, A. P. (2004). A process perspective on leadership and team development. *Journal of Management Development*(1), 7. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02621710410511027>
- Showers, B., & Joyce, B. (1996). The evolution of peer coaching. *Educational Leadership*, 53(6), 12-16.

- Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies : Research and indigenous peoples [Bibliographies Non-fiction]*. Dunedin: New Zealand: University of Otago Press. Retrieved from
<http://ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat05020a&AN=aut.b10502786&site=eds-live>
- Stacey, R. D., Griffin, D., & Shaw, P. (2000). *Complexity and management: Fad or radical challenge to systems thinking* (aut.b23549531). London: NY: Routledge.
- Starratt, R. J. (2011). *Refocusing school leadership: Foregrounding human development throughout the work of the school*. New York: NY: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203843901>
- Stoll, L., & Fink, D. (1996). *Changing our schools*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Strauss, G. (1977). Managerial practices. In J.R.Hackman & L.J.Shuttle (Eds.), *Improving life at work - Behavioral science approaches to organisational change* (pp. 297-363). Santa Monica, CA: Goodyear.
- Taylor, J. R., & Robichaud, D. (2004). Finding the organization in the communication: Discourse as action and sensemaking. *Organisation*, 11(3), 395-413.
<https://doi.org/doi/pdf/10.1177/1350508404041999>
- Thelen, H. A. (1954). *Dynamics of groups at work*. Chicago: IL: University of Chicago.
- Thorpe, R., Gold, J., & Lawler, J. (2011). Locating distributed leadership. . *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 13(3), 239-250. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2370.2011.00303.x>
- Timperley, H., Kaser, L., & Halbert, J. (2014). *A framework for transforming learning in schools: Innovation and the spiral of inquiry*. (234).
- Titchen, A., & Hobson, D. (2011). *Understanding phenomenology through reverse perspectives* (2nd ed.). London, England: Sage.
- Tschannen- Moran, M. (2009). Fostering teacher professionalism in schools: The role of leadership orientation and trust. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 45(2), 217-247.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X08330501>
- Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, A. W. (2001). Teacher efficacy: Capturing an elusive construct. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17(2001), 783-805.
- Tuckman, B. W. (1965). Developmental sequence in small groups. *Psychological Bulletin*, 63(6), 384-399. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/h0022100>
- Tuckman, B. W., & Jensen, M. A. C. (1977). Stages of Small-Group Development Revisited. *Group & Organization Studies*, 2(4), 419-427.
- Tuncdogan, A., Acar, O. A., & Stam, D. (2017). Individual differences as antecedents of leader behaviour: Towards an understanding of multi-level outcomes. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 28(1), 40-64. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lequa.2016.10.011>
- Turner, C. (2000). Learning about leading a subject department in secondary schools: Some empirical evidence. *School Leadership & Management*, 20(3), 299-313.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13632430050128336>
- Uhl-Bien, M. (2006). Relational Leadership Theory: Exploring the social processes of leadership and organizing. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 17, 654-676.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lequa.2006.10.007>
- Uhl-Bien, M., Marion, R., & McKelvey, B. (2007). Complexity leadership theory: Shifting leadership from the industrial age to the knowledge era. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 18(4), 298-318. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lequa.2007.04.002>
- Vaiolaleti, T. M. (2006). Talanoa research methodology : A developing position on Pacific research. *Waikato Journal of Education*, 21-32.
- Vanblaere, B., & Devos, G. (2018). The Role of Departmental Leadership for Professional Learning Communities. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 54(1), 85-114.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X17718023>
- Virtaharju, J. J., & Liiri, T. P. (2017). The supervisors who became leaders: Leadership emergence via changing organizational practices. *Leadership*, 0(0), 1-20.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715017736004>

- Visscher, A. J., & Witziers, B. (2004). Subject departments as professional communities? *British Educational Research Journal*, 30(6), 785-800. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0141192042000279503>
- Voelkel, R. H., & Chrispeels, J. H. (2017). Understanding the link between professional learning communities and teacher collective efficacy. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 28(4), 505-526. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2017.1299015>
- Walker, S., Eketone, A., & Gibbs, A. (2006). An exploration of kaupapa Maori research, its principles, processes and applications. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 9(4), 331-344. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570600916049>
- Widmann, A., Messman, G., & Mulder, R. H. (2016). The impact of team learning behaviors on team innovative work behavior: A systematic review. *Human Resource Development Review*, 15(4), 429-458. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484316673713>
- Wilkinson, J., & Kemmis, S. (2015). Practice Theory: Viewing leadership as leading. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 47(4), 342-358. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2014.976928>
- Woods, P. A., Bennett, N., Harvey, J. A., & Wise, C. (2004). Variabilities and dualities in distributed leadership: Findings from a systematic literature review. *Educational Management, Administration & Leadership*, 32(4), 439-457. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143204046497>
- Wylie, C., McDowall, S., Ferral, H., Felgate, R., & Visser, H. (2018). *Teaching Practices, School Practices, and Principal Leadership: The first national picture 2017* Wellington, New Zealand: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.
- Youngs, H. (2017). A critical exploration of collaborative and distributed leadership in higher education: developing an alternative ontology through leadership-as-practice *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 39(2), 140-154. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2017.1276662>
- Yukl, G. (1989). Managerial Leadership: A review of theory and research. *Journal of Management*, 15(2), 251-289. <https://doi.org/doi/pdf/10.1177/014920638901500207>
- Yukl, G. (2002). *Leadership in organisations* (5th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Yukl, G., & Van Fleet, D. D. (1992). Theory and research on leadership in organisations. In M. D. D. a. L. M. Hough (Ed.), *Handbook of industrial and organisational psychology* (2nd ed., Vol. 3, pp. 147-197). Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press Inc.
- Zaccaro, S. J., Heinen, B., & Shuffler, M. (2009). Team leadership and team effectiveness. In G. G. E. Salas, F., & C. S. Burke (Ed.), *Team effectiveness in complex organizations: Cross-disciplinary perspectives and approaches* (pp. 83-111). New York: Psychology Press.
- Zaccaro, S. J., & Klimoski, R. (2002). Special issue introduction: The interface of leadership and team processes. *Group & Organization Management*, 27(1), 4-11.
- Zeichner, K. M. (2003). Teacher research as professional development for P-12 educators in the USA. *Educational Action Research*, 11(2), 301-326. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09650790300200211>

Appendices

Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet



This information sheet has been created for use with teachers and middle leaders.

5 June, 2018

Project Title - Direction (re)forming: Teachers' accounts of leadership processes in secondary school departments

Kia ora,

My name is Shalini Saxena. I am Head of Faculty (English) in a secondary school and am currently working on a Master of Educational Leadership research thesis at the Auckland University of Technology (AUT). My research focuses on the leadership processes that influence direction forming and the emergence of leadership in New Zealand secondary school subject departments.

I would like to conduct interviews with teachers who are willing to share an account of their understandings and experiences of leadership processes within their subject departments. It is not a study of a school or a department.

What is the purpose of this research?

Apart from fulfilling the course requirement for a Master of Educational Leadership qualification, the research will help me to refine my understanding of leadership. It is expected that the findings will contribute to the understanding of direction forming in the subject departments of secondary schools.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

I extended an invitation to Fully registered teachers and Department Heads in Auckland secondary schools, who have worked with their respective current departments for at least three years, to participate in this research. You responded through an expression of interest. From among the respondents I will select 5-7 participants to include different learning areas, levels of experience, and decile ratings of schools. I aim to have a balance between the number of teachers and Department Heads selected for this study.

Written assurance was obtained from the BOT and Principal that your participation or non-participation in this project will not affect your employment status or relationship with the school. Your identity will not be disclosed to the BoT and Principal.

Fully registered teachers who also hold Senior leadership positions in secondary schools are excluded from this study, as are teachers at my own place of employment.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Should you decide to participate in this research, I would like you to contact me via email khq6849@autuni.ac.nz within five working days of receiving this email.

If you are selected, I will email you a Consent form that you will have time to consider before signing a hard copy at our first meeting. Once there are sufficient participants, I will inform those who expressed an interest, but were not selected.

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?

I will interview you in a closed-off area at your workplace during Term 3 this year at a time that least interferes with your work. The semi-structured interview will focus on your understandings of how direction is formed for your department. You may also be asked to share your professional experiences, personal beliefs, distinctive moments in department meetings, and your understandings of how your department team solves problems related to department functions and leads itself. Should you not wish to be interviewed at your workplace, the interview will be held at the South Campus of AUT. Each interview is expected to take up to an hour and audio recordings will be taken.

Once transcribed you will receive a copy of the transcript to review for two weeks. During this time you can add to, or delete parts of the transcript.

The data thus gathered will be analysed to add to understandings of how direction forms within a subject department and the emergence of leadership in teams.

The details of all participants, departments and schools will be kept confidential and you will not be identified in the final report. The final report may be published in academic journals and presented at conferences.

Once transcribed you will receive a copy of the transcript to review for two weeks. During this time you can add to, or delete parts of the transcript.

The data thus gathered will be analysed to add to understandings of how direction forms within a subject department and the emergence of leadership in teams.

The details of all participants, departments and schools will be kept confidential and you will not be identified in the final report. The final report may be published in academic journals and presented at conferences.

You will receive a small koha in the form of a supermarket voucher as a token of appreciation of your participation in the study.

What are the discomforts and risks?

There is a very low level of emotional discomfort and risk associated with your participation in this research as you recall and share your experiences; all of which may not have been positive.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

You will be free to decline a question and/or withdraw from the interview at any time you feel uncomfortable.

What are the benefits?

This research aims to identify leadership processes that shape the direction of the department. It includes the experiences of teachers with no positional authority (no Management Units or formal designation) to clarify the role played by them in this regard and highlight their contributions.

For participants in positional authority roles, the research may provide avenues for team and teacher development.

I believe that by focusing on the processes, the study will bring me a deeper understanding of how to positively influence emergent leadership, thus improving my own practice as a middle leader. Besides, it will contribute to the completion of a post-graduate degree in Educational Leadership.

How will my privacy be protected?

Should you not wish to be interviewed at school in case you are identified, I suggest meeting at a bookable space on the AUT South campus.

Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality. All interviews are one on one. It is my intention to transcribe all the interviews myself. If for some reason this is not possible then a professional transcription service will be used and they will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your relationship with your school now or in the future. You will be able to withdraw from the study during the research phase and up to two weeks after the reviewing transcripts, without giving a reason. You may also choose not to answer questions during the interview or ask for the recorder to be turned off.

All aspects of the inquiry, except findings, will be treated as confidential. Only the supervisor and I, as the researcher, will have access to the data. Unless in use, all hard copy information relating to the study will be stored in locked filing cabinets at the Auckland University of Technology for a period of six years, after which time the documents will be confidentially destroyed. All electronic files will be kept on password protected computers. Your consent forms will be kept in a locked cabinet separate from all recordings and hard copies of the transcribed data. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but neither the school's name, nor your name will be used in such a report.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The semi-structured interview is expected to take up to an hour of your time. You will also need to spend some time reviewing the transcript of the interview.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You have five working days to consider this invitation.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

You will receive a one- page summary of the research findings at the conclusion of this research. The thesis will be publicly available via AUT library (<https://tuwhera.aut.ac.nz/open-theses>) after it is been examined and uploaded to the library.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Howard Youngs, howard.youngs@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 ext 9633

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details: Shalini Saxena, khq6849@autuni.ac.nz

Project Supervisor Contact Details: Dr Howard Youngs, howard.youngs@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 ext 9633

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 04/09/2018

AUTEC Reference number 18/300

Appendix B: Participant Consent Form

Project title:

Direction reforming): Teachers' accounts of leadership processes in secondary school departments

Project Supervisor: Dr Howard Youngs

Researcher: Shalini Saxena

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 5 June, 2018.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that I have a choice between being interviewed at my workplace or at AUT South Campus.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-recorded and transcribed.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I understand that I will receive a small koha in the form of a supermarket voucher as a token of appreciation for my participation in the research.
- I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- I understand that the findings from this research may be presented at conferences or published in journals.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a one-page summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes No

Participant's

signature:

.....

Participant's

name:

.....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....
.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 04/09/2018

AUTEC Reference number 18/300

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Project title:

Direction reforming): Teachers' accounts of leadership processes in secondary school departments

Project Supervisor: Dr Howard Youngs

Researcher: Shalini Saxena

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 5 June, 2018.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that I have a choice between being interviewed at my workplace or at AUT South Campus.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-recorded and transcribed.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I understand that I will receive a small koha in the form of a supermarket voucher as a token of appreciation for my participation in the research.
- I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- I understand that the findings from this research may be presented at conferences or published in journals.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a one-page summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes No

Participant's

signature:

.....

Participant's

name:

.....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....
.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 04/09/2018

AUTEC Reference number 18/300

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix C: Principal Consent Letter



In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. I have read the Participant Information Sheet and understand the time involved for the school's participation in the project. The researcher has given me the opportunity to discuss the information and ask any questions I have about the project, and they have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand this form will be held for six years.
2. I give consent for the researcher to approach teachers who have expressed their interest in participating in this project to take part in the interviews. I understand that the interviews will take place at the school at a time that suits the participant and the school, or at AUT South Campus during Term 3 this year.
3. I give my written assurance that participation or non-participation of teachers will not affect their employment status, or relationship with the school.
4. I understand that the school may withdraw from the inquiry at any time without prejudice to the school's relationship with the researcher, or the Auckland University of Technology, now or in the future. The timeframe for the school's withdrawal in the study will be until the end of the data collection phase, and the timeframe for withdrawal of any data will be until 30th September, 2018.
5. I understand that the school will not be named in the research outputs.
6. I agree that the results of the study may be published using every effort to maintain confidentiality of the school and the participants.
7. I understand that only the researcher and the supervisor will have access to the data that will be stored securely.
8. I understand that this form and all research data will be stored in secure cabinets for six years. At the end of the six-year period all documents will be shredded in a secure destruction facility and all digital recordings will be deleted.
9. I understand that if I have any questions relating to the school's participation in this research I may contact the researcher who will be happy to answer them.
10. I understand the thesis will be publicly available via AUT library (<https://tuwhera.aut.ac.nz/open-theses>) after it has been examined and uploaded to the library.

Please sign and return one copy of the consent form to the researcher.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____ / _____ / _____

When you have read this information, I will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact me at khq6849@autuni.ac.nz or my supervisor: Howard Youngs, Auckland University of Technology, howard.youngs@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 ext 9633. Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext 6038.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 04/09/2018

AUTEC Reference number 18/300

Appendix D: Invitation to Principal



The Principal and Board of Trustees

.....
.....

Permission to access teaching staff

Kia ora,

My name is Shalini Saxena and I am a Head of Faculty at Pukekohe High School. I am currently working on a Master of Educational Leadership research thesis at Auckland University of Technology. My research focuses on the leadership processes that influence direction forming and the emergence of leadership in New Zealand secondary school subject departments.

I would like to conduct interviews with teachers who are willing to share an account of their understandings and experiences of leadership processes. It is not a study of a school or a department. Teachers in Senior Leadership positions are excluded from this study.

I am inviting your school to be a part of this research study because I am seeking schools of different decile ratings in South, East and Central Auckland. Please read the attached *Principal Information Sheet* and *Principal Consent Form*. If you are willing to allow your staff to participate in this study, please invite expressions of interest from your staff and share my email so that they may directly contact me at khq6849@autuni.ac.nz. Alternatively, I shall be happy to address your staff directly at a morning briefing or staff meeting.

As outlined in the *Participant Information Sheet*, the hour-long 1-1 interviews will take place during term 3 at a time that is convenient for the participant.

If you are willing to have your teachers participate in my research, please let me know and I shall bring a hard copy of the *Principal's Consent Form* for you to sign when I first visit your school. Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Howard Youngs, howard.youngs@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 ext 9633. Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext 6038. My email contact is khq6849@autuni.ac.nz.

I look forward to answering any queries you may have, and a favourable response.

Yours sincerely
Shalini Saxena

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 04/09/2018
AUTEC Reference number 18/300

Appendix E: Indicative Questions for semi-structured interviews

*The focus here is on **processes** rather than individuals in schools.*

*At the beginning of the interview, participants will be reminded not to mention any names of individuals. They will be instructed not to mention individuals and focus on **group processes**.*

Indicative questions for the semi-structured interviews

- What is the structure of the department? How are responsibilities shared?
- What is the role of collaboration in your department?
- How would you describe the direction-setting processes in your department?
- Describe some ways in which the department members contribute to the direction of the department.
- To what extent are these processes emergent, spontaneous and unplanned and why
- How does working collaboratively influence your contribution to direction forming of the department?
- What are some existing processes that you would identify in relation to collective contributions to departmental functions such as curriculum delivery and professional learning?
- What are some barriers that prevent departmental members from making a meaningful or recognisable difference to the decision-making processes in the department? How do department members address these barriers?
- What processes do you think will empower departmental members to make a meaningful or recognisable difference to the decision-making in the department?
- Are there any other key points you would like to make in relation to the matters discussed during this interview?

Appendix F: Confidentiality agreement (Transcriber)



Project title: **Direction (re)forming: Teachers' accounts of processes that matter in secondary school departments**

Project Supervisor: **Howard Youngs**

Researcher: **Shalini Saxena**

- I agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes and documentations received from Shalini Saxena related to her research study titled ***Emergence of Leadership: Processes that matter***.
- I agree to hold in the strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-taped interviews, or in any associated documents.
- I understand that all the material I will be asked to type is confidential.
- I understand that the contents of the notes or recordings can only be discussed with the researchers.
- I agree to store all study-related audiotapes and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession.
- I agree to not make copies of any audiotapes or computerized titles of the transcribed interviews texts, unless specifically requested to do so by the researcher, Shalini Saxena.
- I agree to return all audiotapes and study-related materials to Shalini Saxena in a complete and timely manner.
- I agree to delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any back-up devices, not keep any copies of the transcripts nor allow third parties access to them.
- I am aware that I can be held legally responsible for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audiotapes and/or files to which I will have access.

Transcriber's

signature:

.....

Transcriber's

name:

.....

Transcriber's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....
.....
.....
.....

Date:

***Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 04/09/2018.
AUTEC Reference number 18/300***

Note: The Transcriber should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix G: Organising data

Name of participant	Research question 1	Research question 2	Research question 3	Participant response	Participant response
MAX	What are teachers' understandings of how direction forms and reforms within their subject department?	How do teachers associate direction forming and reforming with key departmental leadership functions?	What strategies do teachers use to address challenges with departmental direction forming?	<i>Perceived challenges with departmental direction forming</i>	<i>Perceived support for departmental direction forming</i>
ANN	Ongoing, open conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of purpose guides all interactions • Common purpose is to improvement for all (including teachers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open lines of communication with Principal, students and colleagues • Welcoming dissent – constructive arguments based on disagreements help to check whether purpose is met • Non-conformity (as opposed to compliance) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top down hierarchy- HoD is authoritarian • Transience of students means uncertainty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room allocation • Timetable
	Spontaneous conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common purpose • Feeling safe to share ideas, try new ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration • Sharing • Helping with daily jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication from Senior Leadership Team may be late or incomplete • Rooming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timetable • Rooming

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class sizes /Staffing shortage 	
PETA	<p>HoD decides direction. Guided by her vision for the department</p> <p>Voluntary sharing of administrative duties</p> <p>Professional dialogue</p> <p>Currently in conflict with LT VISION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transparent practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of collective identity means they do not feel isolated or ‘break’ when things don’t go well Pl sessions are kept unstructured to create room for blue sky thinking Individual, small successes are acknowledged and celebrated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior Leadership Team vision - Authoritarian School-wide practices such as streaming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Common workspace, Rooming Department meeting schedule
LYN	LT decides direction for school and the department has to find ways to align with that – no real say	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing self-review to check if what they do is in line with school vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage teachers to work to their strengths Protect time to focus on department functions such as planning and assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency of change in Senior Leadership Team and policy – Guiding vision seems to be in flux 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timetable Department meetings

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff have become defensive 	
JESS	LT decides and then it is through teacher goodwill that plans are implemented. No scope to be creative or innovative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing self-review to check that all actions are in line with the NZC and school vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praise and celebrate teacher success • Create opportunities for teachers to take responsibility for parts of admin functions so they may grow their skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Leadership Team lack of subject curriculum knowledge , also lack of knowledge of the secondary school sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timetable • Department meetings

Appendix H: Unpacking responses that address research questions

	Research question 1	Possible underlying ideas	Questions that may need further investigation
Research participant	What are teachers' understandings of how direction forms and reforms within their subject department?		
MAX	Ongoing, open conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assumes presence of trust • Affirms the importance of trust • Dynamic environment guided by purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is this assumption checked and evidenced?
ANN	Spontaneous conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assumes presence of trust • Social connections encourage these unplanned exchanges • Affirms the importance of trust • Dynamic environment necessitated by nature of subject as well as purpose of courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is this assumption checked and evidenced?
PETA	HoD decides direction. Guided by her vision for the department Voluntary sharing of administrative duties Professional dialogue Currently in conflict with LT VISION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assumes that everyone in the department agrees with the HoD's vision • Significance of Senior Leadership Team members' actions in relation to the frustration it may create in teachers • Evidences trust within the subject department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is this assumption checked and evidenced? • Could this be an opportunity for self-review, and to examine own values and beliefs?

LW	Senior Leadership Team decides direction for school and the department has to find ways to align with that – no real say	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significance of Senior Leadership Team actions • Frustration is experienced • Demoralising for teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department may not have say in the final destination. Do they have a ‘say’ in determining the processes that will get them to the destination? • What are the options for avoiding these negative outcomes?
SSTI	Senior Leadership Team decides and then it is through teacher goodwill that plans are implemented. No scope to be creative or innovative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significance of Senior Leadership Team members' actions • Stifling environment • Resentment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there an opportunity here for being creative with processes?
	Research question 2	Possible underlying ideas	Questions that may need further investigation
	How do teachers associate direction forming and reforming with key departmental leadership functions?		
MAX	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of purpose guides all interactions • Common purpose is to improvement for all (including teachers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared goal leads to commitment • Non-conformity is accepted as a part of interactions • Assumes a no-risk environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is this assumption checked and evidenced?

ANN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common purpose • Feeling safe to share ideas, try new ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly changeable environment on account of the nature of the subject. • Teachers have to be agile and adaptive in order to deliver the curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seemingly high dependence on social compatibility. How are personality differences factored into the need to be constantly adaptive?
PETA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparent practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires a high trust, no-risk environment 	
LYN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing self-review to check if what they do is in line with school vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significance of reflection and ongoing review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent are the boundaries set by the school vision helpful for direction-forming in a subject department? • Who else is reviewing and evaluating department actions? • What is the role of teacher voice in direction forming?
JESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing self-review to check that all actions are in line with the NZC and school vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significance of reflection and ongoing review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent are the boundaries set by the school vision helpful for direction-forming in a subject department? • Who else is reviewing and evaluating department actions? • What is the role of teacher voice in direction forming?

	Research question 3	Possible underlying ideas	Questions that may need further investigation
	What strategies do teachers use to address challenges with departmental direction forming?		
MAX	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open lines of communication with Principal, students and colleagues • Welcoming dissent – disagreements to check whether purpose is met • Non-conformity as opposed to compliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significance of Senior Leadership Team support • Role of dissent and constructive challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does compliance influence direction-forming?
ANN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration • Sharing • Helping with daily jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High dependence on goodwill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are teachers' contributions acknowledged?
PETA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of collective identity means they do not feel isolated or “break” when things don’t go well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significance of the ‘collective’ • Echoes idea of “community” 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Learning sessions are kept unstructured to create room for blue sky thinking • Individual, small successes are acknowledged and celebrated 		
LYN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage teachers to work to their strengths • Protect time to focus on department functions such as planning and assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assumes positive actions are taken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is this assumption checked?
JESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praise and celebrate teacher success • Create opportunities for teachers to take responsibility for parts of admin functions so they may grow their skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assumes that teachers recognize the link between accepting responsibility and professional growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is this assumption checked?

Appendix I: Sample colour-coding of interview transcript

This is an extract from an interview transcript. The yellow highlighting indicates parts that addressed the research question: What are teachers' understandings of how direction is formed and reformed for their subject department?

The data analysis process is outlined in Appendices G and H.

... three weeks. We have departmental meetings once every three weeks so because there are so few and far between is actually so much that you've got to kind of get it done like the running stuff that you maybe don't have as much of the discussion and learning conversations that you would want but so does the very recent HoD meeting you'd had like with given feedback that we need to have these conversations so it was like all the admin and then the last team that they said Okay well it was almost like tick the box kind of thing

... instead of starting there and giving us time to actually collaborate where we've had the full hour at our disposal and then we could have taken half an hour of.

and when it's 4:20 staff are already going home in their heads. And at the end of the day that is not a good time to expect people to collaborate.

So collaboration your questionnaire around what is the role of collaboration. It's actually driven by your staff's agendas personalities and time.

And then I mean as a leader though I mean like you said in the HoD meetings as a leader in a department you've got to make time and space for the collaboration to happen. So like

you consciously make sure that you don't fill your meetings with admin that you actually remember. Sometimes we like teachers have done a good lesson like tried something new that will present on that in our department meetings and then we've had quite a strong literacy focus this year.

We've got a specialist from two team teams solution teams. So she's come in and work with various departments and there are found there are departments found that very useful when I ask them and she's worked quite well with us. So that's been really helpful. But yeah I think so I think as a leader of the department I think you do need to make that space and time for their collaboration to happen. Otherwise it will never happen because people are just so busy teaching them to survive during the term

Appendix J: Checking the trustworthiness of data

Strategies for checking	Credibility	Transferability	Dependability and Confirmability
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcript checked by participants • Prolonged engagement with data-follow up questions were asked at the interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich description is provided in the thesis for the reader to decide the transferability of the findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An audit trail – the thesis document, including the Appendices provides an evidence of ongoing note-making and reflection. These were shared and discussed with the research supervisor.