THE APPRAISAL
OF
MIDDLE LEVEL LEADERS
IN
NEW ZEALAND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

By

Joanne L Robson

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of
Master of Educational Leadership and Management
Unitec Institute of Technology

2012
Abstract

Appraisal’s dual purposes of accountability and development have the potential to mutually benefit individuals and educational organisations, yet there is a paucity of literature on the appraisal of middle level leaders in secondary schools. Anecdotal evidence indicates that middle level leaders may perceive their appraisal experiences as merely a compliance exercise. Therefore, although middle level leaders fulfil a pivotal pedagogical leadership role, they could feel undervalued and undeveloped.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the appraisal of middle level leaders in three New Zealand secondary schools. The three research questions guiding this study were: Why is performance appraisal of middle level leaders important in New Zealand secondary schools? What are the current performance appraisal purposes and experiences of middle level leaders in New Zealand secondary schools in terms of what constitutes effective appraisal? How can schools improve the performance appraisal experiences of middle level leaders in New Zealand secondary schools? In this qualitative study, 26 middle level leaders completed an electronic questionnaire and five middle level leaders participated in semi structured interviews. Concurrently, each school’s personnel policy and appraisal process was analysed.

Using an interpretive approach, findings of this research exposed that middle level leaders perceive that they are not effectively appraised by senior leaders. The compliance focused approach results in middle level leaders not engaging in formal professional conversations that develop or value them.

This research emphasises that school principals need to develop and implement appraisal policies and appraisal practice that specifically targets middle level leaders. Explicitly outlining accountability and developmental aspects of performance, as well as ensuring ongoing professional conversations are formalised, may lead to middle level leaders feeling valued, developed and empowered.
Acknowledgements

Completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the love and support of some amazing people to whom I am forever grateful.

Firstly, a special acknowledgement to Professor Carol Cardno, my principal supervisor who has continuously encouraged, inspired and challenged me. I have enjoyed the laughs and regular chats. Thanks also to my associate supervisor, Associate Professor Jenny Collins for her thorough and insightful feedback.

I would like to acknowledge my principal, Mike Jackson for his professional and personal guidance and loyalty. Thanks to my Board of Trustees for supporting me over the past three years. I would like to thank the Ministry of Education for granting me a study award this year to fulfil my dream of achieving a Master of Educational Leadership and Management. Thanks to the fabulous Unitec team, especially Howard and Emmie, for making my post graduate experiences memorable, enjoyable and life changing. I would also like to acknowledge the three secondary schools and the middle level leaders who assisted in making this research possible.

A huge thank you to Sandrea for her meticulous proof reading, laughter and ongoing friendship, I totally appreciate every single hour you dedicated to my thesis.

Mum and Dad have always loved, encouraged and supported me unconditionally. Thank you for always being there for me, along with my sisters Melanie and Sera and their gorgeous families. To Brenda, Ruth, Claire, Paula, Anneke and Denis, I am so grateful for your friendship, love and genuine care.

Mikayla, Callum, Madeline and Jack, our future graduates, thank you for your patience, fun and encouragement over the past three years, you make me very proud.

Finally, to the love of my life, Martin, we have made this journey together and I have loved every single moment. Thank you for loving, laughing and learning with me. I am so glad that our paths finally collided and that we will continue our adventure side by side. You are my sweetest thing, I love you always.
Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. i
Table of Contents ................................................................................................................ iii
List of Figures ..................................................................................................................... vi
List of Abbreviations ......................................................................................................... vii
Chapter One ....................................................................................................................... 1
Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 1
   Introduction ................................................................................................................... 1
   Rationale ....................................................................................................................... 3
   New Zealand Context .................................................................................................. 5
   Research Aims and Questions ..................................................................................... 6
   Thesis Organisation ..................................................................................................... 7
Chapter Two ....................................................................................................................... 9
Literature Review ............................................................................................................... 9
   Introduction ............................................................................................................... 9
   Middle Level Leadership ........................................................................................... 9
   The Purposes and Importance of Appraisal ............................................................. 12
   Key Elements of Effective Appraisal ....................................................................... 16
   The Challenges of Effective Appraisal ..................................................................... 19
   Summary .................................................................................................................... 23
Chapter Three ................................................................................................................... 24
Research Methodology ..................................................................................................... 24
   Introduction .............................................................................................................. 24
   Research Methodology ............................................................................................ 24
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Undervalued Practice</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Ineffective Practice</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Appraisal Meaningful: Changing Values and Practice</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths and Limitations of this Study</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas for Further Research</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Information Sheet</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: Electronic Questionnaire</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C: Consent Form</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D: Interview Schedule</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

Figure 6.1: A Balanced Approach ................................................................. 90
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOT</td>
<td>Board of Trustees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERO</td>
<td>Education Review Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOD</td>
<td>Head of Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOF</td>
<td>Head of Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRM</td>
<td>Human Resource Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAGs</td>
<td>National Administration Guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMS</td>
<td>Performance Management System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTC</td>
<td>Registered Teacher Criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMT</td>
<td>Senior Management Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UREC</td>
<td>Unitec Research Ethics Committee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter One

Introduction

Introduction

Educational organisations aim to enhance, improve and maintain the quality of teaching, learning and leading (Middlewood & Lumby, 1998; Morton, 2011; Oldroyd, 2005). Within these organisations, people are the most important asset (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Appraisal and professional development are located within the Performance Management System (PMS), which is positioned under the wider Human Resource Management (HRM) framework. Within education, HRM is a strategic and proactive approach to personnel that aims to balance the external mandatory requirements from government and the school’s strategic goals, with teaching, learning and leading needs, as well as behaviours and skills (Macky & Johnson, 2003; Rudman, 2002).

Appraisal is mandated at national policy level and implemented by the principal on an annual basis within schools. Middlewood and Cardno (2001) assert an integrated appraisal system ensures both organisational and individual needs are met. When these goals and objectives are ‘cascaded’ down into agreed expectations (Forrester, 2011; O’Neill & West-Burnham, 2001), and professional development is aligned to these (Moreland, 2011; Piggot-Irvine & Cardno, 2005), appraisal is more likely to be embedded into the school culture (Middlewood, 1997). An integrated appraisal system provides ideal conditions for effective appraisal to bring significant benefits to the individual and organisation simultaneously (Kemp & Nathan, 1995). Within an HRM framework, a clear alignment and mutuality between individual goals and practice that fit within the organisation, assists professionals in achieving results, as well as empowering and developing them (Oldroyd, 2005). Appraisal’s dual purposes of accountability and development have been promulgated in recent years as a means of improvement, yet Nusche, Laveault, MacBeath, and Santiago (2012) state that “there is little evidence about the quality and impact of teacher appraisal in New
Zealand” (p. 77). Perhaps this is because their findings concluded that variability in appraisal processes is still evident across New Zealand schools (Nusche et al., 2012).

Cardno (2012) contends that when educational leaders make “evaluation of teaching and teachers (performance appraisal) a priority this is likely to have an impact on student learning” (p. 89). Improving student outcomes, however, seems to be the hardest impact to prove. Sinnema and Robinson (2007) argue that instead of teacher evaluation approaches that measure student outputs or teaching styles, they favour an approach that “promotes teachers’ capacity to inquire into and strengthen the relationship between their teaching and their students’ learning in order to achieve the key purpose of evaluation – to improve teaching and learning” (p. 319). Their empirical studies highlight the need to address the current compliance driven approach to teacher evaluation if “time intensive administrative processes are to serve instructional improvement rather than administrative compliance” (Sinnema & Robinson, 2007, p. 322). Cardno (2012) highlights appraisal “can lead to affirmation that performance expectations are being met, and to the identification of areas of improvement” (p. 90). Appraisal dialogue that allows for the individual to give and receive feedback is critical for both improvement and development (Middlewood & Cardno, 2001; Piggot-Irvine & Cardno, 2005).

Whilst the literature on appraisal practice of teachers and principals is vast, there is a paucity of literature available on the appraisal of middle level leaders in New Zealand secondary schools. Rudman (2002) asserts that the shift from personnel management to HRM has resulted in an emphasis on middle level leaders to make decisions that reflect and implement the organisation’s goals, culture and strategy. Middle level leaders, namely subject, curriculum and pastoral leaders, are delegated responsibilities from the principal and have “a pivotal part to play in helping their schools pursue their goals and achieve their objectives” (Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 11). They are teachers; leaders of curriculum, as well as managing staff appraisal and development. Accordingly, Cardno (1995b) believes the role of middle level leaders “demands a constant balancing act between teaching and management expectations” (p. 17), urging schools to support their middle level leaders to ensure
they perform effectively. Blandford (2006) recognises the role middle level leaders hold as teacher/leader, noting that they are also led by senior leaders. Feist (2008) acknowledges that middle level leaders are constantly pulled in a number of directions because they are teaching and leading whilst being led themselves. For the purpose of this research, the term middle level leader denotes leaders with subject and curriculum responsibilities such as Head of Faculty (HOF) and Head of Department (HOD).

Rationale

During my tenure as a middle level leader, I have yet to experience a meaningful appraisal. Whilst I have appraised up to six staff annually, I have only received one formal lesson observation in ten years and am usually expected to fill in a checklist referenced to the Professional Standards retrospectively, if at all. Appraisal is perceived by many middle level leader colleagues as “merely a formal, technical procedure with little or no commitment to its potential” (Cardno, 2001, p. 144). Although my leadership role has evolved over the years, the lack of personal appraisal has resulted in no formal opportunities to adapt my job description. However, Blandford (2006) asserts that a job description must accurately reflect what the role requires. Piggot-Irvine and Cardno (2005) believe job descriptions are the “keystone for all aspects of performance management” (p. 27), ensuring both the appraiser and appraisee know what and how performance will be managed. The Ministry of Education (2012) suggests a negotiation of key tasks and purposes should be undertaken by the principal and middle level leader, which over time “may evolve to better utilise the leader’s strengths” (p. 10). Conversely, the absence of a current job description has created a tension, especially as there is no “indication of the expectations that are held of the particular person performing the job, so that the standards to be met or the results to be achieved are [not] clear from the outset” (Cardno, 2012, p. 91).

Appraisals of middle level leaders have predominantly been conducted by senior leaders who face increased workloads and “accountability pressures” (Bush, 2008,
Consequently, my appraisal experiences have been merely a ‘tick box’ exercise; left to the last possible moment or simply not happening at all. My hunch that this was a common complaint amongst middle level leaders is reflected in research conducted by Chetty (2007) who found that middle level leaders do not feel supported by senior leaders, nor effectively appraised or adequately developed.

Forrester (2011) warns performance management has “brought with it a ‘tick-box mentality’, a decline in trust, changing attitudes and values in education” (p. 8). Cardno and Piggot-Irvine (1997) define the ‘tick box’ approach as assessment against predetermined standardised criteria, rather than an evaluation which “focuses on judging the value of the individual teacher or manager’s performance on the basis of a negotiated job description … and agreed performance expectations” (p. 16). It could be argued therefore, that my personal appraisal has amounted to assessment, not evaluation.

Although appraisal is mandatory and deeply embedded into education (Forrester, 2011), the experiences are perceived by many middle level leaders as anything but evaluative, authentic, robust and rigorous. Moreland (2011) argues performance management should be “a purposeful process which ultimately enhances the learning experience of students” (p. 21). The appeal of performance management, according to Mather and Seifert (2011), is that it is seen as a means of delivering improvement. However, Forrester (2011) asks whether performance management is a breakthrough or a heavy burden, questioning “the extent to which performance management has contributed to improvement, efficiency and excellence” (p. 8).

Instead of an ongoing, reflective process which fosters trust, professional dialogue, accountability, development and improvement (Piggot-Irvine, 2003), my experiences have left me feeling disappointed, frustrated and undervalued. Formal professional conversations have not occurred. These conversations “provides a basis for making judgements and considering what needs to be improved” (Cardno, 2012, p. 90), alongside chances to discuss career progression, professional and leadership development opportunities and succession planning. Instead, there is an assumption that as curriculum leaders we are already quality classroom practitioners and
consequently, trusted with middle level leadership roles, without any formal appraisal dialogue or development. As a result, middle level leaders may believe that they are undervalued and remain undeveloped. In addition, middle level leaders perceive there is a lack of allocated time (Peak, 2010; Wise & Bennett, 2003) and formal appraisal training to effectively conduct their staff appraisals (Chetty, 2007; Piggot-Irvine & Cardno, 2005).

New Zealand Context

Appraisal stems from the educational reforms of the late 1980s which were introduced with Tomorrow’s Schools (Parliament of New Zealand, 1988) and the subsequent Education Act (Government of New Zealand, 1989). There was a shift for schools to become self managed, with the principal being given the responsibility for day to day operations, governed by Boards of Trustees. Schools, shaped by neoliberalism (Codd, 2005), were expected to be accountable, “responsive to their communities” (Cardno, 1999, p. 87), market driven and highly competitive (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008). The move towards an ‘evaluation culture’ (Hudson, 2007), saw the formation of the state’s Education Review Office (ERO), to monitor and report on the overall performance of educational organisations (Cardno, 1999).

In 1996, the Ministry of Education released and distributed the Draft National Guidelines for Performance Management in Schools (Ministry of Education, 1995) and by 1997, replaced these with the Performance Management Systems 1 document (Ministry of Education, 1997). The purpose was to outline a minimum requirement for schools and Boards of Trustees whilst still providing them with the flexibility to design and implement an appraisal system appropriate for their own school context and community. Performance management, involving three connecting concepts of accountability, appraisal and quality assurance, provide an outline for schools, in conjunction with the offer of professional development to upskill educators in these matters. The Professional Standards: Criteria for Quality Teaching (Ministry of Education, 1999b) were developed two years later for attestation purposes (related to salary progression), to ensure “high quality teaching
and leadership in schools and improving learning outcomes for students” (Ministry of Education, 1999b, p. 3). Teacher registration and compulsory professional development were also implemented (Fitzgerald, Youngs, & Grootenboer, 2003) and from 2010, Registered Teacher Criteria (RTC) were introduced to be used alongside the Professional Standards as measures of quality teaching.

Within New Zealand’s devolved education system, the Board of Trustees have responsibility for setting a personnel policy which, in turn, the principal ensures is implemented annually across the organisation (Piggot-Irvine & Cardno, 2005). Consequently, all schools are expected to be conversant with the policies and mandatory requirements outlined in the National Administration Guidelines (NAGs) (Ministry of Education, 1999a), particularly NAG 3, to promote high staff performance.

Almost two decades since the devolution of education in New Zealand, several writers question whether the increased accountability is actually for control and compliance rather than a means of promoting teacher autonomy and professionalism (Codd, 2005; Fitzgerald, 2008; Forrester, 2011; O’Neill & Scrivens, 2005). Middlewood (2001) contends “Education … is being monitored as never before and is likely to remain under considerable scrutiny for the foreseeable future” (p. 192). As a result, tensions are created for middle level leaders when espoused purposes of appraisal in school policies differ from appraisal in practice. Cardno (2001) suggests that appraisal “can remain a highly symbolic goal, espoused by top management but not implemented in any way that actually impacts on improving practice” (p. 144). Thus, it was timely to investigate the appraisal of middle level leaders in three New Zealand secondary schools.

**Research Aims and Questions**

The aims of this research are:

1. To examine the importance placed on appraisal and the purpose of appraisal.
2. To critically investigate the successes and shortcomings of middle level leaders’ experiences of appraisal so that features of effective appraisal can be isolated.

3. To identify what could improve the appraisal experience of middle level leaders.

The three research questions are:

1. Why is appraisal of middle level leaders important in New Zealand secondary schools?

2. What are the current appraisal purposes and experiences of middle level leaders in New Zealand secondary schools in terms of what constitutes effective appraisal?

3. How can schools improve the appraisal experiences of middle level leaders in New Zealand secondary schools?

**Thesis Organisation**

*Chapter One*

This chapter introduces the research topic of middle level leaders’ appraisal in New Zealand secondary schools. The rationale and context, along with research aims and research questions are outlined.

*Chapter Two*

This chapter critically reviews the vast amount of literature on the topic of appraisal drawn from New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Four significant themes emerged in order to examine the purposes, the importance and the challenges of middle level leaders’ appraisal.
Chapter Three

This chapter outlines the research methodology and the three qualitative research methods, as well as data analysis, to justify an interpretive approach selected to investigate the appraisal of middle level leaders in three New Zealand secondary schools. Assurances of authenticity, transferability and triangulation are presented and ethical issues are considered.

Chapter Four

This chapter reports the findings. Key findings are presented under the following headings: profile of middle level leaders, the importance of middle level leaders’ appraisal, appraisal experiences and challenges of middle level leaders.

Chapter Five

This chapter discusses the major findings which are integrated with the themes from the literature review and organised under the following headings of the role of middle level leaders, the importance of middle level leaders’ appraisal, appraisal experiences of middle level leaders and the challenges of effective appraisal of middle level leaders.

Chapter Six

This chapter presents the conclusions and offers recommendations, alongside the strengths and limitations of this study. Areas for further research are signalled.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present a critical review of the literature on appraisal which was analysed and synthesised under the following themes: middle level leadership; the purposes and importance of appraisal; key elements of effective appraisal; and the challenges of effective appraisal for middle level leaders. An articulation of how each theme helped shape the research questions and study is established.

Middle Level Leadership

Identifying middle level leaders

Following the educational reforms in the late 1980s, self managed schools in New Zealand established a senior and middle level hierarchy, vertically and horizontally dividing roles (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008). Consequently, terms such as Head of Department (HOD), Head of Faculty (HOF), middle manager (Bennett, Woods, Wise, & Newton, 2007; Busher, 2005), or more recently, middle leader (Blandford, 2006; Fitzgerald, 2009) and middle level leader (Bush, 2002b; Cardno, 2012) denote classroom teachers who are also “pedagogical leaders at the subject, curriculum and faculty levels” (Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 7). Middle level leaders receive a time allowance and management units as remuneration, based on the school size and their set of responsibilities (Fitzgerald et al., 2003). Yet they do not belong within the senior leadership hierarchy nor are they solely teachers (Fitzgerald, 2000). Busher and Harris (2000) assert that subject leaders “stand crucially at this interface between the whole school domain and that of the classroom” (p. 6). Kemp and Nathan (1995) recognise that as schools expand, so too has the number of middle
level leaders in schools and more importantly, the sheer volume of complex tasks and responsibilities have increased.

The role of middle level leaders

Research conducted by Wise and Bennett (2003) confirms that middle level leaders consider that their role has evolved and they are now expected to lead and manage their curriculum team. Cardno (2005) and Busher (2005) define leadership and management as working with and through others to achieve goals. Thus, middle level leaders manage and lead curriculum areas, alongside an “administration function that has the potential to shift their focus beyond their colleagues and department” (Fitzgerald, 2009, p. 56). Chetty (2007), Dinham (2007) and Peak (2010) argue that the role of middle level leaders has become more complex, challenging and multifaceted. However, Wise and Bennett (2003) believe that the time they are allocated does not match the realities and expectations of the role. Fitzgerald (2009) found the increased time taken up in dealing with leadership and management responsibilities within their department has resulted in middle level leaders conducting their own classroom planning, assessing and reporting outside school hours. Adey (2000) contends “increased pressures bring with them the necessity to acquire knowledge, gain an understanding of new issues and develop new skills if they are to carry out their role responsibilities effectively” (p. 420).

Brundrett (2006) identifies that there is a growing awareness that middle level leaders are central to school improvement, as they are at the forefront of leading innovation and change within curriculum areas as a means of raising student achievement levels. Dinham (2007) and the Ministry of Education (2012) recognises the vertical and horizontal influence middle level leaders exert, emphasising the importance curriculum leaders have in facilitating school improvement. Accordingly, middle level leaders are seen as the conduit between senior management and teaching staff (Feist, 2008; Fitzgerald, 2009), translating the policies of senior management into practice; acting as a liaison and improving staff performance (Busher & Harris, 1999). Research conducted by Feist (2008) shows middle level leaders “ensure key policies and decisions were communicated” (p. 66). Fitzgerald
and Gunter (2008) question whether middle level leaders have been equally distributed power, observing whilst middle level leaders lead others, they are still positioned below the senior leadership team. Middle level leaders are accountable for their performance to senior leaders (Cardno, 1995b).

**Middle level leadership development**

Leadership development in schools has become an important focus area of research and development (Bennett et al., 2007). Due to their positional status (Fitzgerald, 2008), middle level leaders must acquire crucial people skills, especially as appraisal can be “inherently a threatening activity” (Cardno, 2001, p. 146). Busher (2005) believes negotiating and interacting with colleagues is central to middle level leaders’ work, as they are now expected to appraise and develop their staff. Cardno (1995a) asserts that the most demanding task seems to be dealing with people problems. Several authors (Bennett et al., 2007; Gratton, 2004; Sinnema & Robinson, 2007), suggest the need for specific dilemma management training. Cardno (2001) believes a dilemma management approach “has the potential to enable leadership learning that impacts upon complex, recurring problems, and surface those problems” (p. 158). Argyris (1977) contends one of the barriers to surfacing problems is that when people’s emotions are involved, they become defensive and try to avoid the problems.

Effective leadership development, therefore, is vital, must be continuous, planned and deliberate (Bush, 2010). Mentoring and coaching, networking, professional readings and undertaking further studies are just some activities suggested for developing middle level leaders (Cardno, 2012; Chetty, 2007). Schleicher (2011) proposes: “Effective appraisal requires the development of considerable expertise in the system” (p. 34) through professional development. Bush (2008) concurs, suggesting as teachers move into the realms of leadership, they should be given leadership development opportunities. Bolam (2002) emphasises the core task of managing and leading as being central to the improvement of organisational performance. Piggot-Irvine and Cardno (2005) concur, stating that educational leadership that is actively enabling its staff to focus on this core task must be a
Sinnema and Robinson (2007) assert that leaders need to ensure processes such as teacher appraisal are aligned to support the school’s academic goals, so that “their teaching, and ultimately their own students’ learning, can be improved” (p. 338). Therefore, by identifying and examining the role of middle level leaders, as well as the importance of providing middle level leaders with leadership development, this shaped the scope of this research which focuses on the appraisal of middle level leaders.

The Purposes and Importance of Appraisal

Defining appraisal

Terms, borrowed from business and industry such as performance management, evaluation, quality and accountability (Bush, 2003; Collins, 1996; Fitzgerald, 2009; Middlewood, 2002), have permeated the “professional vernacular” (Grootenboer, 2000, p. 121) following the educational reforms of the late 1980s in New Zealand and the United Kingdom (Cardno & Piggot-Irvine, 1997). O’Neill and West-Burnham (2001) state that performance management had emerged as “a functional accountability, relating judgements about individual performance to an essentially economic model based on measurable outcomes rather than a professional model” (p. 6). Forrester (2011) asserts that performance management was brought into education “to remedy the perceived inadequacies” (p. 5) of its educators.

Earlier literature (Blandford, 1997; Kemp & Nathan, 1989) addressed accountability and development as two separate entities. However, in order to evaluate and judge what needs to be improved, alongside accountability, Cardno (2005) situates appraisal centrally within a holistic approach to professional development. Schools inextricably link appraisal with professional development (Collins, 1996; Fitzgerald, 2001), emphasising “performance expectations that are mutually agreed between individual appraisers and appraisees” (Cardno & Piggot-Irvine, 1997, p. 18). Kemp and Nathan (1995) assert that people need to be developed to their full potential in order to “make best use of human resources” (p. 172) whilst simultaneously achieving the aims of the organisation.
Piggot-Irvine and Cardno (2005) suggest appraisal is “used to describe evaluative activity that involves making qualitative judgements about performance, once competency is established.” (p. 15). This definition points to appraisal that evaluates performance with an end goal of improved student outcomes. Evaluation, both formative and summative, is essentially an informed judgement, based on inquiry, about the quality of performance, whereas assessment is the measurement of performance against standardised criteria (O’Neill & Scrivens, 2005; Piggot-Irvine & Cardno, 2005). In New Zealand, Fitzgerald (2008) observes “teachers have been increasingly subjected to systems that assess whether they meet criteria for registration, evaluated against a set of professional standards to judge competence, attested for salary increments and appraised to review performance” (p. 119). Likewise, in the United Kingdom, Mather and Seifert (2011) state a succession of state driven frameworks have been provided to direct and manage staff performance, with the assumption that teachers “do not self regulate their own performance sufficiently well or are not trusted to self perform well” (p. 27).

The purposes of appraisal

Cardno (2012) articulates that appraisal is “a comprehensive and complex process involving multiple purposes and activities” (p. 93). Located under the wider HRM framework (Macky & Johnson, 2003; Rudman, 2002), performance management systems function at both organisational and classroom level (O’Neill & Scrivens, 2005), encapsulating an entry to exit cycle which includes induction, ongoing appraisal, development and an exit interview on staff departure (Cardno & Piggot-Irvine, 1997). Appraisal has dual purposes of demonstrating accountability and targeting development needs (Middlewood, 1997; Middlewood & Cardno, 2001), ideally in a balanced, non polarised way (Middlewood, 2002). When accountability and development are transparently integrated, both the organisation and the individual mutually benefit (Cardno, 2012). This has the potential to improve student outcomes (Moreland, 2011; Schleicher, 2011). Therefore, Moreland (2009) considers that conveying the purposes of appraisal clearly to staff is “the key to successful enculturation of performance management” (p. 763). Gratton (2004) reinforces this view, stating when the process is meaningful, staff can gain ownership. A case study
conducted by Piggot-Irvine (2010), although in a primary school context, reveals that staff feel that knowing the purpose of appraisal is of significant importance.

Middlewood and Lumby (1998) state: “Educational organisations depend for their success on the quality, commitment and performance of people who work there” (p. 5). Therefore, appraisal measures, evaluates and reflects on quality at both the individual and organisational level (Piggot-Irvine & Cardno, 2005). Blandford (2006) believes appraisal is an audit of evaluation in order to motivate and develop its individuals. By identifying what is working well, alongside areas of further development, empowers staff to develop and improve (Kemp & Nathan, 1995).

Cardno (1995a) suggests schools have a responsibility to demonstrate to communities that they are, not only accountable, but that they are improving the quality of the education they provide. Brundrett and Rhodes (2011) suggest middle level leaders need to ensure that their teams and individuals within these teams, are valued and developed, alongside a collective ownership of the organisation’s vision, aims and goals.

Several writers support the notion that appraisal is predominantly for accountability and development (Middlewood, 2002; Piggot-Irvine & Cardno, 2005; Youngs & Grootenboer, 2003), yet some debate whether the underlying purpose of appraisal is bureaucratic control as opposed to professionalism (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008; Youngs & Grootenboer, 2003). Self managed schools are subjected to more accountability measures than ever before (Codd, 2005; Forrester, 2011; O'Neill & Scrivens, 2005), yet Brundrett and Rhodes (2011), state “It is ironic that increased accountability in education has been mirrored by significantly increased autonomy for schools” (p. 22). Fitzgerald (2001) argues whilst appraisal is seen as professional accountability, compliance is obtained through state driven prescriptions. O'Neill and West-Burnham (2001) raise a concern with a measurement approach to appraisal is that it will “of necessity, be reductionist, instrumental and will tend to simplify to facilitate comparative measurement and so judgement” (p. 10). The negative connotations of a bureaucratic approach imply control, compliance, regulation, standardisation, surveillance, scrutiny and “a progressive yet unrelenting erosion of trust in the professional work of teachers” (Fitzgerald, 2008, p. 115). Codd
(2005) warns that external accountability may weaken teachers’ autonomy and commitment to professionalism. Fitzgerald (2008) urges teachers and the profession to fight back to retain their professionalism.

Despite the dominance of bureaucratic measures, research conclude that participants still consider their appraisal to be professional (Youngs & Grootenboer, 2003, p. 88). Nusche et al. (2012), reporting on teacher appraisal, formed the view that teachers are perceived as trusted professionals, “underpinned by the high levels of school autonomy” (p. 75). A professional approach, concerned with empowerment, “professional knowledge, autonomy and expertise” (Fitzgerald, 2008, p. 113), describes teachers as “reflective practitioners [who] thrive on collaboration, knowledge sharing, collegiality, freedom, self-efficacy, professional practice and democracy” (Fitzgerald et al., 2003, p. 95). The professional approach acknowledges the human emotions and aspirations of teachers, rather than simply measurable results (Codd, 2005; Middlewood & Cardno, 2001; O’Neill & West-Burnham, 2001). Fitzgerald et al. (2003) state: “there is a moral obligation to promote and sustain a professional conception and culture of teaching that is perceived, enacted and appraised as thoughtful, reflective practice” (p. 95). The newly introduced Registered Teacher Criteria (2010) reinforces the belief that teachers are reflective practitioners. These provide an extensive set of criteria and evidence based portfolio within “an aspirational framework of continued professional learning and development” (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2010, p. 2), in line with current quality teaching best practice. Yet for middle level leaders, who are both teachers and leaders, Nusche et al. (2012) identify that RTC do not “specify skills and competencies at different stages of the career in association with roles and responsibilities” (p. 79). Whilst the dual purposes of accountability and development underpin appraisal, according to Nusche et al. (2012), there is still room to improve the links between them. Therefore, the multiple purposes of appraisal could be reflected within the appraisal of middle level leaders.
The importance of appraisal for middle level leaders

As pivotal pedagogical leaders, it is important that middle level leaders receive meaningful appraisal, especially as they “help shape innovation and lead change in schools, particularly change directed at raising student achievement” (Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 5). Appraisal as a means of facilitating accountability and enabling development (Cardno, 2005), is addressed at three interdependent and inseparable levels: the ‘education system’ itself, aimed at auditing and reviewing the school in order to improve the quality of teaching, learning and leading; the ‘organisation’ with its charter and goals for school improvement and finally, the ‘individual’ teacher who will develop through reflective practice and professional responsibility (Cardno & Piggot-Irvine, 1997). Schleicher (2011) supports this notion, suggesting that appraisal is “essential for improving the individual performance of teachers and the collective performance of education systems” (p. 33). The Ministry of Education (2012) urges that “schools develop the middle level leaders who will support teachers and students to meet the challenges of the twenty first century” (p. 22). Cardno and Piggot-Irvine (1997) assert that “when performance appraisal is made a priority and a channel for enabling others it can be a really satisfying partnership” (p. iv). In the case of middle level leaders’ appraisal, this partnership would most likely be between senior and middle level leaders.

Literature discussing the purposes and importance of appraisal for middle level leaders became relevant to shaping the research question examining why middle level leaders’ appraisal is important in New Zealand secondary schools. Ensuring appraisal is made a priority, requires effective appraisal in practice.

Key Elements of Effective Appraisal

Effective appraisal has the potential to enhance performance, acknowledge and celebrate greatness, as well as ensuring teachers are developed accordingly (Bradbury, 2001). An analysis of the extensive literature over the past two decades provides a synthesis of the predominant elements of effective appraisal under the
following headings: ownership and empowerment; quality time; and interpersonal relationships.

Ownership and empowerment

Middlewood (1997) believes that appraisal is effective when it embedded within the culture of the school. Rather than just a bureaucratic measure, it should be seen as the ‘way things are done around here’ (West-Burnham, 2001b). The school’s mission, strategic direction, goals and objectives should cascade down to agreed expectations for individuals and teams (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Forrester, 2011; Middlewood, 2002; O’Neill & West-Burnham, 2001) and professional development aligns with these expectations (Moreland, 2011; Piggot-Irvine & Cardno, 2005). By ensuring that the appraisal system is valued, staff should be actively part of the ongoing development, implementation and review process to gain ownership and empowerment (Edwards, 1992; Nusche et al., 2012; Riches, 1997). Blandford (2006) asserts that balancing the demands of professional development and public accountability is critical, particularly as appraisal should “improve the quality of education for pupils by assisting the school workforce to realise their potential and to carry out their duties more effectively” (p. 270).

To ensure middle level leaders are able to undertake their role and responsibilities effectively, a valid job description should accurately reflect their job expectations and requirements (Blandford, 2006; Kemp & Nathan, 1995). However, research conducted by Chetty (2007) indicates that just over half of middle level leaders in her study had a clear job description. The Ministry of Education (2012) urge that middle level leaders should negotiate key tasks and responsibilities with the principal. Kemp and Nathan (1995) contend that job descriptions should reflect the areas in which “the school places its priorities” (p. 27).

Likewise, appraisal goals and objectives should be realistic and attainable (Bradbury, 2001; Kemp & Nathan, 1995). When individuals have ownership of these goals, they are more likely to be motivated to improve (Middlewood, 1997). Conversely, research conducted by Sinnema and Robinson (2007) establish that the
“predominance of vague rather than specific and challenging goals that focus on satisfying requirements” (p. 337), do not empower or motivate teachers to improve their practice. Once staff gain ownership and feel empowered within the appraisal system, the next critical issue is that of quality time.

**Quality time**

A significant element of effective appraisal identified across a substantial body of literature is the allocation of quality time (Cardno & Piggot-Irvine, 1997; Fitzgerald et al., 2003; Schleicher, 2011; Sinnema & Robinson, 2007). Maximising the impact of appraisal requires resources, especially quality time (Blandford, 2006; Kemp & Nathan, 1995; Schleicher, 2011). Middlewood (1997) contends that quality time can affect “attitudes towards appraisal and thereby its effectiveness” (p. 182). Therefore, Piggot-Irvine (2003) proposes “management (particularly middle managers as the key implementers) must be given time and support to implement appraisal” (p. 175). In addition, she urges the need for senior leaders to model good appraisal practice by ensuring they make it a high priority within their own time management.

Research conducted by Peak (2010) indicates that middle level leaders want more time for their leadership tasks, yet feel frustrated at the increased pressures of accountability within their role. Blandford (2006) recognises that effective elements of appraisal include “trust, training, resourcing, time, support and commitment” (p. 271). This requires relationships that are open, transparent and positive (Piggot-Irvine, 2003).

**Interpersonal relationships**

The third major element of effective appraisal identified in the literature is relational. Middlewood and Cardno (2001) argue that the most important appraisal activity should be interpersonal. Engaging in appraisal dialogue is crucial (Bradbury, 2001), as is building mutual trust, open honest productive dialogue, respect and transparency for both the appraiser and appraisee. Cardno (2012) believes effective appraisal: “rests on the mutual agreement of the appraiser and the appraisee about
what is expected in terms of performance” (p. 91). This may ensure the appraisal experience is mutually enhancing (Clark, 2001; Grootenboer, 2000; Middlewood, 2001; Piggot-Irvine & Cardno, 2005; Riches, 1997). Piggot-Irvine (2003) believes that effective interactions are “non-controlling, non-defensive, supportive, educative and yet confidential” (p. 172). Productive dialogue which is open and honest, can assist with identifying professional development needs (Cardno, 2012).

Piggot-Irvine and Cardno (2005) assert that productive relationships are those that focus on mutually agreeing on goals as well as resolving dilemmas that may arise. In addition, an ‘educative’ relationship is “based on bilateralism (shared control, shared thinking, shared evidence, shared planning and monitoring)” (Piggot-Irvine, 2003, p. 176). When appraisal systems are implemented effectively, “greater trust exists between managers and staff, and a culture of improvement and development is palpable” (Piggot-Irvine & Cardno, 2005, p. 11). Thus, relational skills are essential in all aspects of school life (Bolman & Deal, 2008), yet they remain critical in the highly complex and challenging arena of appraisal. By establishing the key elements of effective appraisal, this shaped the research question that investigates the current appraisal experiences of middle level leaders in terms of what constitutes effective appraisal.

**The Challenges of Effective Appraisal**

Challenges hindering the effectiveness of appraisal are presented under the following headings: the conflicting purposes of appraisal; middle level leaders’ conflicting role; lack of time and training to conduct effective staff appraisals; and the paucity of literature on the appraisal of middle level leaders. Schleicher (2011) suggests there is “considerable scope for improving the impact of evaluation, appraisal and feedback” (p. 36).
Conflicting purposes of appraisal

The conflicting purposes of appraisal, Grootenboer (2000) cautions, may be “fraught with ethical fishhooks and dilemmas” (p. 126). With the introduction of appraisal in the early 1990s, the conflicting purposes of the “anxiety-provoking” (Cardno, 1995a, p. 119) experience include debate over bureaucratic control versus teacher autonomy (Cardno, 1999; Youngs & Grootenboer, 2003). In other words, accountability is realised at the detriment of development. Two decades later, the conflicting purposes remain. Schleicher (2011) identifies “many teachers feel that appraisal has no or little consequence” (p. 33). Equally, Forrester (2011) asserts performance management is still perceived as a form of managerial control. Moreland (2011) proposes the shift from the “concept of performance management as a once a year, paper-chasing exercise” (p. 24) towards an ongoing process of managing performance. Although there is agreement about appraisal’s accountability measure for improving teaching, learning and leading, the direct evidence that this may be achieved through appraisal is yet to be recognised (Fitzgerald, 2008; Nusche et al., 2012; Sinnema & Robinson, 2007; Youngs & Grootenboer, 2003).

Cardno (2012) asserts appraisal is a complex issue. This opinion is echoed by several authors who believe tensions may be generated when schools attempt to meet both the needs of the organisation while at the same time, developing its individuals (Middlewood & Cardno, 2001; O’Neill & Scrivens, 2005; Piggot-Irvine & Cardno, 2005). Schleicher (2011) acknowledges that “achieving both these aims simultaneously is challenging” (p. 34). Cardno (1999) believes in order for appraisal to address accountability and improvement, both evaluation and development are required. However, there may be considerable difference between schools’ “espoused theories (what they say they do) and their theories-in-use (what they actually do)” (Cardno, 1999, p. 93). In other words, whilst schools espouse appraisal purposes in school personnel policy, this may differ in practice. Gratton (2004) indicates that when there is a mismatch between individual and organisational purposes, this may create a tension.
Middle level leaders potentially have the greatest influence on teaching, learning and leading (Ministry of Education, 2012), yet if their appraisal is perceived as merely a compliance exercise, it could become “hollow and meaningless” (Cardno & Piggot-Irvine, 1997, p. viii). Thus, Cardno (1995a) highlights the importance of effectively managing the tension between the conflicting purposes and expectations of the various stakeholders, including Board of Trustees, teachers and middle level leaders through productive conversations which includes dialogue about performance.

**Middle level leaders’ conflicting roles**

Stemming from the educational reforms of the late 1980s, (Cardno, 1995a) principals, in turn, inherited a new set of rules, regulations and responsibilities, including improving staff capabilities (Cardno, 1995a; Fitzgerald et al., 2003). Consequently, tasks such as appraisal have been delegated, in many schools, to middle level leaders within the line management structure (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008; Piggot-Irvine & Cardno, 2005). Busher and Harris (1999) acknowledge “the complexity of a management role within the middle of a hierarchy” (p. 308). Feist (2008) argues that although there may be a tension for middle level leaders between “competing managerial and professional demands” (p. 60), in her study they were “mindful to locate their work within the professional role of leading teams of teachers in the pursuit of improved teaching and learning” (p. 60). Bennett et al. (2007) highlight that middle level leaders are firstly torn between organisational expectations and loyalties within their department and secondly, between “a growing school culture of line management within a hierarchical framework and a professional rhetoric of collegiality” (p. 455). Therefore, middle level leaders find themselves situated in a central position within the organisation.

Research conducted by Fitzgerald et al. (2003), concludes that “core appraisal work was carried out by middle managers” (p. 92). This is fraught with challenges as middle level leaders are now expected to carry out their teaching and curriculum responsibilities, including developing staff and achieving organisational goals, as well as appraising them. Moreover, middle level leaders may feel overburdened and frustrated with their amplified role expectations, “without the commensurate increase
in their salary or time allowance” (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008, p. 334). Although these additional responsibilities may have been tentatively accepted by middle level leaders, Adey (2000) suggests it “does not of course indicate that such responsibilities are being carried out successfully” (p. 428). Middle level leaders who teach as well as manage the performance of others, tend to observe only ‘snapshots’ of their teachers (Middlewood, 2002), running “the risk of being artificial” (p. 124). This has the potential to exacerbate dilemmas (Cardno, 2012), which may lead to issues of resentment and alienation of staff (Middlewood, 2002). Thus, middle level leaders’ conflicting roles (Blandford, 2006; Bush, 2002b) may continue to be challenging when there is a perceived lack of time and training to conduct effective appraisals of their own staff.

**Lack of time and training to conduct effective appraisal**

A lack of time, lack of appraisal training and numerous external and internal demands, may have led “appraisers to employ a simplistic approach that emphasised compliance rather than a more time consuming professional approach that focused on development and reflective learning” (Youngs & Grootenboer, 2003, p. 82). Fitzgerald et al. (2003) conclude that teachers with “extra management responsibility are less likely to have sufficient time to effectively enact their school’s appraisal process” (p. 102). Hence, time intensive professional approaches may be replaced with compliance driven tick box approaches, which may result in an undermining of “collegial, high trust relations” (Mather & Seifert, 2011, p. 30) rather than professional autonomy that teachers expect.

Time constraints are a common complaint amongst middle level leaders (Chetty, 2007; Peak, 2010; Wise & Bennett, 2003). Increased expectations for performance and accountability, additional levels of resources, including training and time for middle level leaders have still not been forthcoming (Chetty, 2007; Collins, 1996; Fitzgerald, 2008; Piggot-Irvine, 2003). An empirical study of middle level leaders conducted by Fitzgerald (2009) reiterated the perceptions by many as “a deficit position; about knowledge skills, attributes and experiences” (p. 60) they are yet to attain. Fitzgerald (2009) suggests that adequate time has not been forthcoming for
middle level leaders “to work with colleagues in order to connect change with their
own core purposes” (p. 62). Whilst literature on middle level leaders overall has
increased in recent years, there is a dearth of literature that specifically addresses
the appraisal of middle level leaders in New Zealand secondary schools.

**Paucity of literature on the appraisal of middle level leaders**

Literature focusing on appraisal practices of teachers and principals are extensive
(Cardno & Piggot-Irvine, 1997; Moreland, 2009; West-Burnham, 2001a). However,
Edwards (1992) examines the challenges in measuring the performance of leaders’
abilities and outputs, emphasising that appraisal should be “illuminating and growth
producing … without threat or danger or intrigue” (p. 4). Middlewood (2002)
acknowledges the challenge of how middle level leaders should be effectively
appraised for their leadership qualities, asserting that “there is considerable pressure
to identify the means to assess accurately the performance of those responsible” (p.
119). With the increasingly significant and influential role of middle level leaders, they
are to be appraised on both their leadership and teaching capabilities, yet there is a
paucity of literature on the appraisal of middle level leaders in New Zealand
secondary schools. The literature on the challenges of effective appraisal shaped the
research question that identifies how schools can improve the appraisal of middle
level leaders.

**Summary**

This chapter provided an in depth literature review of appraisal, critiquing four
significant themes: middle level leadership; the purposes and importance of
appraisal; key elements of effective appraisal; and the challenges of effective
appraisal for middle level leaders, which underpin this study. Research methodology,
data analysis and ethical considerations for the three research methods nominated,
are presented in the following chapter.
Chapter Three

Research Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline and discuss the qualitative research methodology selected and the historical context within which it is located. Three methods of electronic questionnaire, semi structured interview and documentary analysis were employed within three New Zealand secondary schools. A profile of each selected school is presented. The ways in which data was analysed, along with assurances of authenticity and transferability are presented. Ethical issues are addressed.

Research Methodology

Historical context

Educational research is distinctive from its social science counterparts with its unique dual role which recognises “the power of the processes of education and the effects that education has on all aspects of human life” (Keeves, 1997, p. 277). Two contrasting research approaches are the positivist and interpretive approach (Davidson & Tolich, 2003). Positivism claims a traditional natural scientific model applied to social science, is objective, neutral and tangible and involves deductive reasoning (Bryman, 2008; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Davidson & Tolich, 2003). However, Cohen et al. (2007) argue that positivism may be limited when applied to human behaviour research because the “immense complexity of human nature and the elusive and intangible quality of social phenomena contrast strikingly with the order and regularity of the natural world” (p. 11). As an alternative to positivism, Guba and Lincoln (2005) believe the social sciences as characteristically favour a more interpretive approach because of its ability to recognise the uniqueness of people (Bryman, 2008; de Landsheere, 1997). An interpretive view, according to Cohen et al. (2007) acknowledges the ways people differ from each
other. Ultimately, theory is induced from subjective observations and findings (Bryman, 2008; Conger, 1998). With the varied contexts and situations in education, Cohen et al. (2007) assert “these theories are likely to be as diverse as the sets of human meanings and understandings they are to explain” (p. 22).

Cohen et al. (2007) assert the methodological approach selected for the research problem and the types of questions to be investigated are all influenced by the researcher’s viewpoint. Bryman (2008) concurs, suggesting the researcher’s values will influence the research design throughout the process. Although qualitative and quantitative methodological research are often polarised, several writers (Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2002; de Landsheere, 1997; Keeves, 1997) concede they should be viewed on a continuum. Traditionally, quantitative research methods were associated with positivism, whereas from the 1960s, qualitative researchers promoted “the humanistic virtues of their subjective, interpretative approach to the study of human group life” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 2). Unlike quantitative research which focuses on deducing analysis of data (Bryman, 2008), qualitative research is perceived as being a more fluid, interconnected process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) which is descriptive rather than prescriptive in its nature (Bryman, 2008). Cohen et al. (2007) distinguish the qualitative researcher as needing to view contexts from the participants’ perspectives, rather than their own. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) state “Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (p. 10). Bryman (2008), however, reiterates that whilst “quantitative and qualitative research represents different research strategies and that each carries with it striking differences in terms of the role of theory, epistemological issues, and ontological concerns” (p. 23), these are general tendencies and not absolutes.

**Methodology**

In this study, the chosen epistemology was in line with an interpretive approach, involving words and descriptions which may be analysed qualitatively. Creswell (2002) highlights qualitative approaches tend to allow literary creative styles of
writing which are exploratory, observable and subjective. An interpretive approach was deemed appropriate within the qualitative methodology, as it enables the issue of appraisal to be viewed through the eyes of middle level leaders (Bryman, 2008) and interpreted accordingly. By investigating the appraisal of middle level leaders, an “understanding of the way in which the individual creates, modifies and interprets the world in which he or she finds himself or herself” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 8) was acquired. Flexibility is valued as essential by Conger (1998) and Davidson and Tolich (2003), especially as qualitative research allowed for precise descriptions ascertained from middle level leaders within each school. The focus on middle level leaders provided the opportunity to understand and interpret their views (Cohen et al., 2007).

The research questions guiding the investigation into the appraisal of middle level leaders within three New Zealand secondary schools fitted comfortably within a qualitative methodology. This allowed an understanding of the happenings that “shape action (or inaction)” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 197). To address the first research question, the vast literature on appraisal was critiqued to examine the purposes and importance of appraisal for middle level leaders. The second research question aimed to critically investigate the successes and shortcomings of middle level leaders’ appraisal in order to isolate features of effective appraisal. The third question aimed to identify how schools can improve the appraisal of middle level leaders to create “an agenda for change” (Creswell, 2002, p. 19). Once the research problem and research questions were precisely established, Bell (2007) and Bryman (2008) urge researchers to ensure the appropriate research instruments are employed.

Research Methods

Research instruments are the means by which data collection is conducted (Bryman, 2008; Hinds, 2000). The three methods utilised in this study were: electronic questionnaire; semi structured interview; and documentary analysis. The electronic questionnaire and semi structured interview were considered primary sources as
“they are elicited or initiated by the researcher” (Wellington, 2000, p. 108), whereas documentary analysis was a secondary source. In order to conduct research using an interpretive approach, multiple methods captured “as much of reality as possible” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 11). Fontana and Frey (2005) acknowledge that as people are complex, there is a need to utilise multiple methods in order to interpret these complexities effectively.

Selection of schools

Three secondary schools were selected for this study. Each school was designated a label: School A, School B and School C to maintain anonymity. Each school, from the Auckland region, is a coeducational state secondary school, selected for their willingness to participate, as well as accessibility for the researcher. School A and C are Year 9-15, whereas School B is Year 7-15. Building school networks and contacts over the past years proved invaluable, as approaching potential schools would otherwise have proved challenging. Initially principals were protective of their middle level leaders. However, once the time demands were clarified and that it was entirely voluntary, letters of access were obtained from each secondary school.

Each school nominated a liaison person which helped with effective communication and potential response rates (Bell, 2007). Interestingly, two of the school liaisons who were senior leaders, only promoted this research once they had this year’s appraisal process underway. The school liaisons were able to disseminate information sheets (Appendix A), which were also embedded into the electronic questionnaire, which provided “consistent background information to each participant about the purpose of the study in order to minimise tacit assumptions” (Krueger, 1994, p. 65). Two of the school liaisons provided a list of email addresses, whereas one principal preferred their school liaison to only allow the email addresses of respondents willing to partake. This school’s response rate was the lowest of all three, indicating the preferred practice for a researcher would be to obtain direct contact.
Method One: Questionnaire

Selection of respondents

Of the 46 electronic questionnaires (Appendix B) sent to potential respondents (n=46), a sample of 26 middle level leaders was obtained. This comprised of 15 respondents from School A, five from School B and six from School C. This provided a response rate of 56%. The low number of respondents from School B and C were disappointing, especially as two reminder emails were sent to potential respondents in coordination with the school liaison.

Purposive sampling was selected because of its “relevance to understanding a social phenomenon” (Bryman, 2008, p. 415), in this case, the appraisal of middle level leaders. The secondary schools were selected with the direct purpose of ascertaining data in order to explore the appraisal of middle level leaders. The intent was to examine emerging themes from the data (Creswell, 2002).

Research instrument: Electronic questionnaire

An electronic questionnaire was selected in order to elicit responses and make comparisons (Hinds, 2000). A questionnaire is a method of collecting data in the form of questions or statements from a large number of respondents based on people’s ideas and attitudes relating to the research topic (Bryman, 2008; Hinds, 2000). Despite the disadvantages of utilising a questionnaire which include a limited response rate; the inability to probe or prompt the respondent, and the perceived amount of time to process data analysis, the questionnaire was an effective way of obtaining a large amount of information (Bell, 2007; Bryman, 2008; Hinds, 2000). The selection of appropriate types of questions whilst challenging, remained critical for its overall success.

Questionnaire design

In order to increase response rates, the electronic questionnaire was carefully planned and structured using Google Docs, a free web based service which was
easy to administer and to collate information. An electronic questionnaire was elected as a way of providing respondents the opportunity to complete at a time convenient to them. Bryman (2008) urges that a clear layout, concise instructions and setting both a realistic yet reasonable completion time helps make the questionnaire user friendly. Likewise, constructing quality questions ensured relevant and pertinent information was elicited (Bell, 2007; Bryman, 2008).

The electronic questionnaire was divided into four parts, the first obtained demographic information such as leadership experience, number of staff to appraise and the size of their department. These were instantly coded (Bryman, 2008) using Google Docs as they were closed questions. In part two information regarding the respondents’ perceptions of appraisal was elicited using Likert scales of predetermined categories on a continuum of six, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree (Bell, 2007; Bryman, 2008). Respondents rated the importance of a series of statements, as well as their perception of the school’s performance in each area. Each statement had additional space for comments, although many respondents did not make use of these. In part three respondents were asked to select all of the applicable statements to best reflect their appraisal in practice. Open ended questions were offered in part four to allow respondents to reflect openly about their personal appraisal (Bell, 2007; Hinds, 2000). This was advantageous as personal views were ascertained in order to explore new areas which arose (Bryman, 2008; Fontana & Frey, 2005). Finally, respondents were invited to participate in a thirty minute interview, the second research instrument.

Pilot questionnaire

At this juncture, the electronic questionnaire was piloted with three middle level leader colleagues who were not involved in this research. They completed the electronic questionnaire, as well as three questions based on the construction of the questionnaire to ensure the questions were easy to understand and answer. The completion time on average was 15 minutes, not the ten minutes which was predicted. The responses elicited in the pilot, indicated that the questions were appropriate (Bell, 2007; Bryman, 2008; Krueger, 1994).
Analysis of data

Qualitative analysis involves the process of converting raw research data into research findings or results (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006). Watling (2002) asserts that analysis is an integral part of the research process, and must be repetitive and ongoing. By interpreting the data, emerging patterns and groupings emerged (Bell, 2007). Using inductive analysis, whereby “the analysis is driven by the data themselves” (Lofland et al., 2006, p. 195), the data was thematically analysed by applying codes (Bryman, 2008).

Essentially “coding is the process of sorting your data into various categories that organise it and render it meaningful” (Lofland et al., 2006, p. 200). In other words, coding is the tool for organising relevant information and identifying recurring themes and patterns. The open ended answers, although already organised under broad themes from the literature, needed to be post coded. Using Charmaz’s (2001) suggestion, open ended questions were asked about respondents’ comments, line by line during the ‘initial coding’. Moving into ‘focused coding’ then allowed for an expansion and elaboration of middle level leaders’ responses (as cited in Lofland et al., 2006). Once the data was coded, it was ready for the next step of “systematic qualitative data analysis” (Lofland et al., 2006, p. 203). By examining data generated from the questionnaire, emerging themes and concepts were identified (Hinds, 2000), which assisted with the application of the second research method, the semi structured interview.

Method Two: Semi Structured Interview

Selection of participants

Five middle level leaders were interviewed using a semi structured interview. This comprised of the first two willing participants from School A and School B to be interviewed face to face. Only one middle level leader was interviewed at School C. Prior written consent (Appendix C) was obtained to outline the interview process and to preserve their confidentiality. Although the interview has become a natural part of
life, Fontana and Frey (2005) warn response rates continue to decline. To counterbalance this, the benefits of conducting research regarding the appraisal of middle level leaders were underlined. As an interviewer, it was important to be well prepared and remain flexible in order to fit in with the participants’ demanding workloads.

Research instrument: Semi Structured Interview

Due to the potentially sensitive nature of appraisal, a semi structured interview provided intimacy and flexibility to elaborate and expand on a set of questions or specific topics (Bryman, 2008). Interviewing has become a prominent method of data collection as a means of eliciting in depth information (Bryman, 2008) and seeking clarification of a particular issue (Hinds, 2000). As the research focus was clear from the onset, the semi structured interview allowed “rich, in-depth experiential account of an event or episode” (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 698). Probing and prompting further ascertained respondents’ point of views on their appraisal experiences, which would have proved difficult in a structured interview.

Interview design

A semi structured interview schedule (Appendix D) helped generate some semblance of order with regards to potential questions (Bryman, 2008), and provided the researcher security and confidence. As with the questionnaire, selecting appropriate questions for the semi structured interview was essential. An ‘ice breaker’ was used to open the interview. Middle level leaders were asked to describe their role, before moving into introductory, transitional and key questions pertinent to the research questions (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Wragg, 2002). Kvale’s (1996) nine different question types (as cited in Bryman, 2008) assisted with providing a range of introductory, probing and specifying questions and interpreting questions. Using silence as a form of question, according to Kvale (1996), allowed participants the opportunity to reflect and expand on their answers (as cited in Bryman, 2008). Silence, whilst seemingly difficult, proved to be an excellent technique as participants often provided deeper descriptions.
Pilot questions

In order to receive constructive feedback on the interview questions, these were piloted in advance with two middle level leader colleagues not involved in this study (Bryman, 2008; Hinds, 2000; Wragg, 2002). This ensured the questions clearly stimulated relevant material, whilst eliminating ambiguity. Kvale’s (1996) ten criteria of a successful interviewer include being knowledgeable, remembering, interpreting and being sensitive (as cited in Bryman, 2008), assisted with refining interview techniques. Bryman (2008) suggests being ethically sensitive towards the participant and remaining balanced so as not to dominate the interview nor be too inactive. As an empathetic interviewer, the participants’ perspectives were ascertained, producing “negotiated accomplishments shaped by the contexts and situations in which they take place” (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 716).

Conducting interviews

Remaining alert and unobtrusive, using a reliable recording device and making notes on what was observed and heard were ways to ensure the participant was relaxed and at ease. Remaining an active listener, being flexible and empathetic, developing trust and good rapport (Bryman, 2008; Fontana & Frey, 2005) was imperative. During the interviews, responses were recorded accurately to avoid bias (Hinds, 2000) and to safeguard against personal agendas or ideas influencing the participants’ outcomes. Non verbal gestures were noted alongside the participants’ answers (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Hinds, 2000). This provided further insight into how things were being said or inferred. Bryman (2008) asserts “researchers are frequently interested not just in what people say but also in the way that they say it” (p. 451). To conclude, using Hinds’ (2000) recommendation, participants were asked if there were any issues yet to be addressed, allowing them to add comments, thoughts or opinions whilst the interview was still in progress and being recorded.

Analysis of data

The final stage of the interview process was the transcription and analysis of findings. Bryman (2008) and Hinds (2000) argue this process may be
overwhelmingly time consuming, stressing the numerous hours required for each hour of interviewing. However, by remaining disciplined, this onerous task was completed promptly in a methodical, persistent manner (Lofland et al., 2006; Wragg, 2002). Once participants approved their verbatim transcripts, the vast amount of rich qualitative data was analysed thematically using coloured codes. Based on themes from the literature review and the research questions, data was examined to identify the recurring issues. The primary sources of data were analysed concurrently with documentary analysis.

**Method Three: Documentary Analysis**

To strengthen the questionnaire and interview data, each school’s personnel policy and appraisal processes were analysed. This allowed a critique of each school’s appraisal purpose and practice in order to interpret the importance and purpose of appraisal (Hinds, 2000). Cortazzi (2002) and Bryman (2008) suggest “a searching-out of underlying themes” (p. 529) in order to analyse the content and its meaning. ‘Meaning’, in this instance, refers to an interpretation of intention, purpose and audience (Wellington, 2000). To interpret and analyse the schools’ policies and processes, Wellington’s (2000) framework of eight different areas were interpreted under the following headings: Authorship, Audience, Production, Presentation, Intentions, Style/function/genre, Content and Context/frame of reference (Wellington, 2000). These headings allowed for an examination of the documentation beyond the surface level to interpret underlying connotations.

**Authenticity and Transferability**

To ensure the findings in this qualitative research were authentic, dependable and transferrable to other school settings, Guba and Lincoln (1994) offer alternatives to the concepts of validity and reliability, namely ‘authenticity’ and ‘transferability’. These concepts were adopted, rather than reliability and validity which “presupposes that a single absolute account of social reality is feasible” (as cited in Bryman, 2008, p. 377). According to Cohen et al. (2007), “validity is the touchstone of all types of
educational research” (p. 134), yet internal validity seemed most appropriate in this study as it examines the causal relationship between data and findings to ensure there is a correlation between both. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) believe that internal validity “tends to be a strength of qualitative research” (as cited in Bryman, 2008, p. 376). Triangulating primary sources of data with documentary analysis provided one measure of authenticity.

**Triangulation**

To ensure authenticity, ‘triangulation’ was applied (Bryman, 2008; Cohen et al., 2007; Conger, 1998; Davidson & Tolich, 2003; Keeves, 1997). Cohen et al. (2007) propose triangulation “attempt[s] to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint” (p. 141). By consolidating the data collected in three way, the accuracy of findings was determined (Bush, 2002a). Triangulation of research conducted in three secondary schools and utilising three different research methods, the appraisal of middle level leaders was examined and interpreted accordingly.

Owing to the subjective nature of interviewing, participants were provided with an opportunity to validate their interview transcript, as well as the final analysis, to ensure a true account was recorded and subsequently interpreted authentically, fairly and ethically (Bryman, 2008; Fontana & Frey, 2005; Hinds, 2000). According to Johnson (2002), “the most important ethical imperative is to tell the truth” (as cited in Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 716). One ethical issue was to ensure that the research process was open and transparent.

**Ethical Issues**

Synonymous with terms such as morals, values, principles and protocols, the issue of ethics, Bryman (2008) asserts, arises throughout the social research process, to ensure the integrity of the research itself. Wilkinson (2001) acknowledges whilst social research may offer several benefits, it can also impose burdens on others.
Fontana and Frey (2005) contend as people will be central to the research conducted, “extreme care must be taken to avoid any harm to them” (p. 715). Therefore, a series of ethical principles were used to guide the researcher. Diener and Crandall (1978) offer four main overlapping classifications of ethical principles: harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception (as cited in Bryman, 2008).

Submission and the subsequent approval of the ethics proposal was an imperative step before the commencement of the research inquiry by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee (UREC). This ensured research participants and researchers were protected, whilst also guaranteeing the institution itself was not threatened, “so that researchers will be deterred from behaving in ethically unacceptable ways that might rebound on institutions” (Bryman, 2008, p. 117).

No conflict of interest was identified at any of the selected schools or the middle level leaders interviewed. Schools were designated a label in order to retain anonymity and confidentiality. Interview participants were given pseudonyms, starting with the letter of their corresponding school, in order to maintain confidentiality. Whilst there was no perceived physical harm involved in using the nominated research methods, the potential for emotional harm was evident as appraisal is an area which could be sensitive. As an interviewer, being aware of participants’ verbal and non-verbal clues to safeguard their emotional safety was vital (Bryman, 2008). To ensure there was no risk of harm, prior consent was obtained from each interview participant.

Informed and voluntary consent, according to Bryman (2008), is the “area within social research ethics that is most hotly debated” (p. 121). An information sheet was disseminated prior to conducting the questionnaire as well as embedded in the electronic questionnaire. This reiterated that participation was entirely voluntary and confidential. By completing and submitting the questionnaire online, each respondent gave tacit consent. The questionnaire invited people to consider being an interview participant. Prior consent was obtained from them to inform participants of the interview processes. Approval was obtained from participants once they had
checked the authenticity of the transcripts, safeguarding the integrity of this research in the event any concerns were consequently raised (Bryman, 2008).

All data, which was only shared between the supervisor and researcher, was stored on a memory stick and will be retained, in a locked cabinet stored in the office, by the researcher for the required five years.

**Summary**

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss the interpretive approach selected. Using qualitative research methods of electronic questionnaire, semi structured interview and documentary analysis; assurances of authenticity and transferability were identified in terms of data analysis. Ethical issues were addressed. The next chapter reports the findings from the data.
Chapter Four

Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to report the findings from the data which was collected using methods of electronic questionnaire, semi structured interviews and documentary analysis. The vast amount of data is consolidated and the key findings are presented under the following headings: the importance of middle level leaders’ appraisal; appraisal experiences of middle level leaders; and the challenges of effective appraisal for middle level leaders. Key findings are presented for School A, B and C, with an integration of the primary sources of data. Interview participants were designated a name which corresponds with the first letter of their school. Documentary analysis is presented independently. To begin, a profile of the 26 middle level leaders in this study is provided.

Profile of Middle Level Leaders

Of the 15 middle level leaders who completed the electronic questionnaire at School A, nine were females and six males (n = 15). The majority of respondents have been teaching for over ten years, and half of them with more than eight years’ middle leadership experience. Seven of the middle level leaders’ curriculum departments contained at least four teaching staff who they are expected to appraise. All 15 middle level leaders are assessed against the Professional Standards (unit holders) and half identified using Registered Teacher Criteria (RTC). Most middle leaders are appraised by a senior leader. In this study, 12 respondents perceived that their leadership role is multifaceted and rewarding both personally and financially. Yet only half indicated they feel supported by senior management. Of the 15, three felt influential. Andrea chose her words carefully and commented:

I guess school wide, a ‘liaison’ between teaching staff and senior management, is a polite way of putting it.
Aidan listed the numerous tasks required of him as a middle level leader which included:

_Overseeing the goings on in the department which include: behaviour management; performance management of staff, appraisal; regular observations; monitoring and checking units align with requirements; moderation._

At School B, five middle level leaders, two females and three males (n= 5), completed the electronic questionnaire. The majority have over ten years teaching experience, with three middle level leaders having at least four years middle level leadership experience. Their curriculum departments comprised of at least seven staff. Four middle level leaders appraise between two and six teaching staff. Most of the middle level leaders are appraised by a senior leader and assessed against the Professional Standards (unit holder). Three middle leaders utilise RTC.

During the semi structured interview, Bernadette, an experienced middle level leader HOF, described her massive undertaking overseeing six subject areas, including her own curriculum area. Her role included:

_Making sure their course planning is current, their unit planning aligns; assessment and moderation processes; professional development; staff appraisal; budgeting – running and setting the budget; data analysis, reporting to the Board – which is a massive undertaking._

Of the five respondents, four middle level leaders in this study perceived that their leadership role is rewarding and multifaceted, yet feelings of being overworked were highlighted. Only one middle level leader felt influential in their leadership role. Beatrice, who has recently joined the school in a middle level leadership role, described her functions in terms of:

_I am in charge of curriculum programmes, as well as oversee the teachers within the department. I am also a tutor teacher for a beginning teacher._
Four female and two male middle level leaders, (n= 6) who completed the electronic questionnaire at School C, are experienced classroom teachers, yet there is an evenly spread range spanning over 13 years of middle level leadership experience. Three middle level leaders in this study run large departments of more than ten staff, with four of them appraising at least four teaching staff. Two appraise ten or more. Each middle level leader is appraised by a senior leader and assessed against the Professional Standards (unit holders). Three identified the use of RTC. Of the six respondents, five middle level leaders perceived that their leadership role is multifaceted; yet not one indicated that they are supported by senior management. Only one middle level leader believed that they are influential in their role. Cordelia, an experienced curriculum middle level leader who was interviewed, commented:

*We act as a liaison between the senior managements’ ideas and then taking these to our department meetings and keeping everybody informed.*

**Profile of middle level leaders: Key Findings**

Overall, the 26 respondents in this study have a wide range of teaching and leadership experience. Most middle level leaders are appraised by a senior leader and assessed against the Professional Standards (unit holders). Half of the middle level leaders in this study also utilise RTC. In this study, 21 middle level leaders identified their role as being multifaceted, listing a comprehensive list of curriculum and administrative tasks. Of the 26 respondents, 11 felt overworked and 17 perceived that they are not supported by senior management. On average, middle level leaders appraise at least four teaching staff. Half of the middle level leaders in this research perceived themselves to be a conduit between their teaching staff and the senior management. Only five respondents felt that they are influential in their middle level leadership role.

**The Importance of Middle Level Leaders’ Appraisal**

In order to examine the importance of middle level leaders’ appraisal, the findings from the questionnaire and semi structured interviews are presented under the following headings: purposes; value; and benefits of appraisal. Documentary
analysis of each school’s personnel policy is presented first to provide insights into the ‘espoused’ policies of the intended purposes of appraisal.

**Documentary Analysis**

According to School A’s policy, which is reviewed annually, the purpose of performance appraisal is to:

> *Create an environment of continuous improvement for staff and students through a robust appraisal process owned by all staff.*

The guidelines include the appraisal processes as well as the commitment that:

> *Outcomes of the appraisal will be tied to professional development.*

Each department is expected to include a budget request for required professional development.

As part of the personnel management policy for School B, which aligns with NAG 3, the Board of Trustees and school develop and implement appropriate personnel management procedures, including staff appraisal and professional development in order to:

> *Promote high levels staff performance. To be a good employer as defined in the State Sector Act 1988.*

The principal is expected to ensure teacher appraisal is completed and:

> *Report annually to the Board on teacher appraisals*

School C’s Board of Trustees’ personnel policy located under the heading ‘Performance Review’, requires the performance of all staff to be reviewed annually to:

> *Ensure ongoing improvement in performance in order to provide the best possible opportunities for student success.*
In addition, under a separate heading of ‘Professional Development’, the Board is committed to developing staff and outlines that staff will have access to quality professional development and will:

*Maximise the benefits of this professional development in order to provide the best possible opportunities for student success.*

In summary, the schools’ personnel policies, which reflect Ministry requirements, espouse the purpose of performance appraisal is to improve the performance of their teaching staff, in order to raise student achievement. Appraisal is to be conducted annually, it should be an ongoing, inclusive process and the principal is responsible for ensuring staff are appraised. The process remains confidential between the appraiser, appraisee and principal. Appraisal is explicitly linked to professional development. However, there is no specific mention of performance appraisal for middle level leaders nor who should appraise them.

**Purposes**

To examine the perceived purposes of appraisal, information was obtained from both the questionnaire and semi structured interviews. Respondents were asked to select the purposes of performance appraisal from a list in the questionnaire. A Likert scale was utilised to elicit how effectively the purpose/s are publicised at their school. During the semi structured interview, the purposes of middle level leaders’ appraisal were obtained.

Of the 26 respondents, 16 middle level leaders perceived that the purpose of appraisal is clearly publicised and that the school performs well in this area. This was described in terms of receiving a reminder at the beginning of the year and:

*This is available in written form and followed but there is a feeling of having to tick the boxes correctly.*

*The process is clearly identified within the school but the underlying reason for the process is not.*
From a checklist in the electronic questionnaire, 21 respondents identified self improvement as the purpose of appraisal. Informing professional development was selected by 19 middle level leaders, and 16 respondents identified compliance and attestation as the purposes of appraisal. Accountability and a tick box exercise were selected by half the middle level leaders in this study. One middle level leader commented:

*It is seen as a chore rather than a process to raise student performance in the classroom.*

Whilst 10 respondents at School A perceived evaluation to be a purpose of appraisal and three respondents at School C, not one middle level leader at School B selected this as a purpose of appraisal. However, contradictions were revealed during the semi structured interviews regarding the purposes of appraisal. Aidan stated:

*Here’s where I have issues. It is supposed to be that you check the quality and standard of teaching to check they are performing at an acceptable standard. Instead it is really a data collection exercise, a tick box activity, a fill in the gaps here to ensure someone needs to check it’s all done.*

Bernadette, a curriculum head of faculty, acknowledged that whilst the current appraisal/attestation process is set up with the right intentions to reflect, get feedback on our performance, ways of improving, yet in reality, she believed the actual purpose is:

*To be honest, a tick the box basically … I am pretty much left to it really.*

Andrea and Aidan commented on the accountability purpose of their appraisal which included:

*Check that I am doing the job … a tick box exercise, with little obvious appraisal of me as a leader; the signing off of teacher registration every three visits.*

*Pretty much two observations and then we are done and dusted…not much going on … can’t recall if it happened last year.*
Here it is evident that the purpose of performance appraisal for them has amounted to compliance, if it happens at all. A similar perspective on the purpose of appraisal was given by Cordelia:

*To tell you the truth, I have got no idea. It’s not done that thoroughly; at our level it’s ticking boxes.*

Overall, the most common purposes of appraisal identified by middle level leaders in this study were: self improvement, informing professional development, compliance and attestation. During the interviews, further probing of participants revealed the predominant purpose of appraisal was described in more negative terms, as an accountability measure for compliance. Most School A and B respondents believed improving student teaching and learning is a purpose of appraisal, whereas at School C, only one middle level leader identified this as a purpose of appraisal. Although 16 middle level leaders in this study believed the purpose is clearly publicised, this seemed to be described in terms of the appraisal process being outlined, as opposed to its purpose. Evaluation was selected by less than half of the respondents as a purpose of middle level leaders’ appraisal.

**Value**

To investigate the value placed on middle level leaders’ appraisal, the electronic questionnaire asked whether appraisal is a key focus of the school and if respondents perceived that the appraisal system is rigorous. Interview participants were asked to comment on the importance placed on their personal appraisal as a middle level leader.

Of the 26 middle level leaders in this study, 14 personally felt that appraisal is not a key focus of the school and 17 perceived that their school is not performing well in this area. In addition, middle level leaders commented that appraisal is:

*Done in department meeting, not whole school. Introduced late in the year.*

*Seen as another requirement to tick off rather than a professional learning tool.*
Whilst 15 middle level leaders perceived that the appraisal system is rigorous, 16 respondents believed that their school is not performing in this area, especially compared to the staff appraisals they are expected to undertake:

*I fulfil the school requirements and produce appraisals on each member of the department. However, this is never referred to which makes you wonder the extent to which it is read or considered?*

*It appears to be as rigorous as the HOD wants to make it.*

*The forms are collected and deadlines given if that is what you mean by rigorous. If you are not performing well I am not sure of any process to correct it is in place?*

*I was never appraised for the last two years as an HOD. As a result I don’t feel particularly thrilled about all the appraisals I am expected to do.*

During the semi structured interviews, further inquiry showed that whilst importance is placed on middle level leaders to appraise their teaching staff, little importance is placed on their personal appraisal. Andrea remarked:

*As far as I am concerned, it doesn’t seem to be a lot of importance. The importance seems to be from middle management down, not middle management up*

Aidan emphasises the fact that middle level leaders are left to do their job, without being personally appraised:

*I don’t think there is any focus on it; there is just an expectation that … they must be able to do the job*

Beatrice and Bernadette perceived that a lot more emphasis is placed on performance, in terms of student results and data analysis. Although Beatrice is new this year, from her viewpoint, not a lot of importance is placed on appraisal:

*I know it has to be done, but I haven’t been through a cycle … not sure how it fits or what comes of it … it is near the end of term 3 and yet to begin.*
Overall, there is an expectation that the middle level leaders in this study appraise a significant number of their teaching staff, yet these may not be referred to by senior leaders. In contrast, middle level leaders perceived that their own personal appraisal is not a key focus. They believe that little importance, if any, is placed on appraising them. As a result, most middle level leaders felt frustrated and perceived their appraisal to be a meaningless and rushed tick box exercise. In some instances, middle level leaders stated that their appraisal has not happened at all.

**Benefits**

Interview participants were asked to discuss the short and long term benefits of middle level leaders’ appraisal. In the electronic questionnaire, a perception of the impact appraisal has on teaching, leading and learning was established.

Andrea perceives the current appraisal system as a meaningless exercise. She suggested:

> It could be a much more meaningful exercise where there is a really good conversation about my performance as a middle manager and career – where I would like to go … leadership opportunities within the school.

Likewise, Aidan’s perspective on the benefits of appraisal was:

> I think it can guide you to make improvements, as well to push you to develop further to where you might want to go. Someone needs to be able to assist and guide you … making it a continual learning process.

Beatrice and Bernadette advocated the benefits of appraisal as affirmation; a tool for continuing reflective practice, alongside an opportunity to have ‘conversations’ and mentoring which is ongoing and productive. Bernadette emphasised that within her faculty, she chats with her teachers about where they are heading in terms of their career path. She would like this reciprocated:

> I’d like for someone to have those conversations with me.
Cordelia reflected on the short term and long term benefits of middle level leaders’ appraisal, which included having professional and personal ‘conversations’ to reflect on what has occurred. Also affirmation and positive reinforcement from senior management instead of just at department level, alongside:

*Having weaknesses identified and send me on something that would really help, or even a school wide one where we have opportunities to get together, compare notes and say what is working and what is not.*

Across all three schools, there was an emphasis on the need to have formal professional conversations in order to impact on learning. Andrea acknowledged the many informal conversations that have occurred and assumed:

*If senior management had any concerns about any middle leaders, they might deal with it a little different.*

Whilst 15 middle level leaders in this study agreed that appraisal should positively impact on teaching, learning and leading, 15 respondents thought that their school does not perform well in this area:

*Focus needs to be on learning, and the quality of teaching that leads to it.*

*I would think that emphasis placed on conversations … would benefit the individual teacher and in turn impact the learning experience.*

*There is a need for more rigorous discussion on this by staff so that it does make a difference.*

Overall, middle level leaders view the key benefit of appraisal is the importance of formal, ongoing appraisal conversations. These formal conversations provide mentoring and could lead to a positive impact on teaching, leading and learning. Whilst middle level leaders engage in dialogue with their own staff during the appraisal process, formal professional conversations do not occur between senior and middle level leaders. Middle level leaders felt that formal conversations have the potential to identify leadership opportunities and career progression. They felt that by
engaging in reflective practice which emphasises learning, there could be a focus on the quality of teaching and leading that is required to accomplish this.

**The importance of middle level leaders’ appraisal: Key Findings**

To reflect Ministry requirements, the personnel policy for each school outlines the purpose of appraisal is to improve teaching staff’s performance on an annual basis, to improve student outcomes. Appraisal is linked to professional development. No specific mention of middle level leaders’ appraisal is apparent nor who is to appraise them.

However, whilst middle level leaders identified multiple purposes of appraisal ranging from self improvement, informing professional development, compliance to attestation, the five interview participants viewed the purpose of their personal appraisal was predominantly for accountability and compliance. Very few middle level leaders identified evaluation as a purpose of appraisal. Most middle level leaders agreed the purposes of appraisal are clearly publicised at their school, yet this was in terms of the appraisal process as opposed to the purposes.

Middle level leaders in this study were in agreement that appraisal should be a key focus in schools, identifying its potential to benefit teaching, learning and leading. Although there is an expectation that middle level leaders appraise a number of teaching staff, middle level leaders in this study feel frustrated when they receive no feedback or follow up from senior management. As for their personal appraisal, they believe that little importance is placed on their own appraisal. This is exacerbated by the fact that when they are appraised, it is often rushed and simply a tick box exercise for compliance. The accountability purpose is addressed, whereas the developmental aspect is not. There is an assumption that middle level leaders are able to do their job and therefore, are left to enact it, without the opportunities to discuss or identify personal and leadership development.

Interview participants in this study wanted to know that they are valued, professionally and personally developed and empowered by senior leaders. Many
Middle level leaders in this study highlighted that formal, ongoing professional conversations and mentoring from senior leaders would demonstrate that they are valued and that they have an important role within the school.

**Appraisal Experiences of Middle Level Leaders**

To investigate the appraisal experiences of middle level leaders, findings are presented under the following headings: appraisal in practice; the successes and shortcomings of middle level leaders’ appraisal experiences; and improvements to enhance middle level leaders’ experiences. First analysis from each school’s appraisal process is presented to compare these with what happens in practice.

**Documentary Analysis**

The annual appraisal process at School A which is emailed to staff, outline the procedures for all teaching staff. There is an initial meeting to discuss goals and how the individual will fill in the evidence for the appropriate Professional Standards. Next, the data collection stage includes two lesson observations and evidence collected for the relevant Professional Standards. Finally, at the closing meeting, the:

*Appraisee has completed ‘Appraisal self evaluation’. The appraiser completes the ‘Appraisal Summary Sheet’.*

Appraisals of middle level leaders, as unit holders, are not specifically mentioned in the appraisal process. The ‘Appraisal Summary Sheet’ referred to as ‘Attestation against Professional Standards: Evaluation’ allows room to make notes on areas of good performance and further development, a tick box for completion of student evaluations and lesson observations, alongside:

*Development goals agreed upon for the next cycle are: Individual and Departmental goal (if applicable).*

‘Appraisal Summary Sheets’ are retained by the appraisee as well as a copy for their file. The principal requires a copy for teacher registration. The individual goals are forwarded to assist with professional development planning.
School B offers two options for its appraisal process, which runs from Term 2 to the end of Term 1 the following year, either ‘Lesson Observation’ or a ‘Collaborative Appraisal’. Both options follow three steps: an initial meeting, data collection, including a lesson observation or collaborative lesson and a closing meeting where the:

Appraisee and appraiser meet to discuss Registered Teacher Criteria and job description (unit holders), self assessment and complete the Appraisal Report.

The ‘Appraisal Report’ for attestation against Professional Standards is a template which outlines the performance management expectations. Successes, achievements and areas to work on are filled into the spaces provided, by both the appraisee and the appraiser. Teaching, faculty and school wide objectives are identified, alongside a box for highlighting professional development undertaken and requested:

This report must be signed off by the HOF. Appraisee and Appraiser keep copies of all documents. Appraiser to forward a copy of the report to the principal and confirm appraisal process has been completed with Deputy Principal.

Middle level leaders at School C are expected to complete an HOD ‘Performance Review Booklet’ during the April to April appraisal round. This includes: identifying school, department and individual goals, a classroom observation, Professional Standards for experienced teachers, alongside the Professional Standards (unit holders) which includes:

Resource management; staff and student management; professional leadership.

The ‘Review Report’ which is completed by both the appraiser and appraisee, summarise successes and achievement, future goals and professional development requests. This must be returned to the Deputy Principal.
In summary, each school outlines appraisal as an ongoing process which requires an initial meeting, at least one classroom observation and a final meeting for assessment against Professional Standards (unit holders). Goals and objectives, professional development, successes and areas to work on are also reviewed. The keywords used by the schools are performance, review, evaluation and assessment for attestation.

Each school requires the appraisee and appraiser to complete an ‘Appraisal Report’, namely an ‘Appraisal Summary Report’, ‘Appraisal Report’ and ‘Review Report’ respectively. This summarises the main aspects of their appraisal and from here will be referred to as an ‘Appraisal Report’. School A and B do not specifically identify middle level leaders in the appraisal process, other than the requirement that their job description should be reviewed. In contrast, School C provides an HOD ‘Performance Review Booklet’.

Therefore, at each school, the focus is on the completion of the ‘Appraisal Report’ for compliance. Although professional development is mentioned in the ‘Appraisal Report’, there is no specific reference made to middle level leadership development that may have been undertaken or requested.

**Appraisal in practice**

Questionnaire respondents were asked to highlight what they were provided with during the appraisal process, what they undertake during the appraisal cycle and how they perceive their appraisal experiences to be. Interview participants were further questioned on their personal appraisal experiences.

During the appraisal cycle, 17 middle level leaders in this study are provided with timeframes for completing appraisals; 13 respondents are given the strategic plan and school vision. Of the 26 respondents, 24 undertake classroom observations, 22 undertake self assessment, and 21 conduct student surveys. Half of the middle level leaders in this study undertake professional development. Of the 26 respondents in this study, only 12 middle level leaders engage in productive dialogue. Six
respondents set deep objectives, undertake leadership development and meet regularly with their appraiser. In this study, only 10 middle level leaders felt that adequate time is given to them to conduct staff appraisals. However, not one middle level leader identified that appraisal training is provided.

In this study, 20 respondents identified their appraisal experiences as reflective and 14 middle level leaders felt their personal appraisals are confidential and evaluative. However, over half of the middle level leaders in this study felt that their appraisal does not improve teaching, leading and learning, is not productive, not mutually enhancing, not developing them personally or professionally and not celebratory. Furthermore, over half of the middle level leaders in this study do not receive leadership development; do not set deep objectives nor regularly meet with their appraiser.

Further probing during the semi structured interviews, revealed the participants’ experiences in more detail. It was evident that the five interview participants perceived that they do not receive meaningful personal appraisals. Andrea’s personal appraisal experiences over the past four years have been rushed and minimal:

In Term 4, my senior manager says I need to visit your classroom to do an observation, it happens twice, usually late in the year and there is a very quick follow up conversation and that is pretty much it. There is little obvious appraisal of me as a leader.

Similarly, Aidan outlined the professional approach he takes, yet it is not followed up by the senior leader:

You fill in an online form that we have, you record for yourself how you have met the criteria, you collect evidence of things that you have done, kind of compile that into a Clearfile and that is there if someone should wish to have a conversation with you. So it is really a data collection exercise.
Both interview participants at School B opt for the ‘Lesson Observation’. Bernadette, an experienced middle level leader, remarked cynically:

\[\text{I have not been formally observed [teaching] in ten years. What I do get back from X informally, is all very positive, generally I only go through the so called appraisal and attestation process once every three years or (laughs), when we are being ERO’d.}\]

At School C, although the middle level leaders in this study are provided with an HOD ‘Performance Review Booklet’ for attestation, Cordelia, an experienced curriculum middle level leader, perceived that the process of appraisal is a five to ten minute chat and:

\[\text{We have a booklet and usually you check that you have met the standards for a unit holder basically. Maybe no complaints are what they take as being alright.}\]

In summary, whilst many middle level leaders in this study perceived their appraisal experiences to be reflective, evaluative and confidential, further probing revealed that their personal appraisal is anything but meaningful. Although most middle level leaders in this study are given timeframes for completion and undertake classroom observations and student surveys to conduct staff appraisals, their own appraisal tends to be rushed. There is a minimal approach taken by senior leaders, with a tendency towards data collection and completing boxes for compliance instead. Common findings showed that only six respondents meet regularly with their appraiser and set deep appraisal objectives. Of the 26 respondents, 12 engage in productive dialogue. However, not one middle level leader in this study has received appraisal training for conducting their teaching staff appraisals. Furthermore, their experiences, if they happen at all, do not impact on their teaching, learning and leading nor develop them personally or professionally.

**Successes and Shortcomings**

Both questionnaire respondents and interview participants were asked to describe the successes and shortcomings of their personal appraisal. From the responses
elicited, it became apparent that middle level leaders in this study viewed successes in terms of the positive experiences they have had during appraisal, and shortcomings in terms of the negative, disappointing experiences they have encountered. As a result, successes and shortcomings will be referred to from here as positive and negative experiences. In addition, interview respondents commented on whether their appraisal informs their professional development requirements.

From the electronic questionnaire, the most common positive experiences of middle level leaders in this study were mentioned in terms of student evaluations and positive affirmations they received from colleagues. Self reflection and being professional in terms of meeting deadlines were viewed as positives. One middle level leader viewed mentoring and evaluating their staff as an ongoing process, whereas the appraisal documentation just a formality. Aidan, based on his time teaching in England, described his Headteacher as someone who encouraged and empowered its leaders to work to their strengths and continually develop. The Headteacher was:

\textit{Constantly setting us tasks to achieve; regular observations; higher level discussions; mentoring, coaching.}

Other comments about the respondents’ positive appraisal experiences included:

\textit{Identification of areas of stress that need extra resources both in time and financial; Ways to complete the jobs required.}

\textit{Personal goal setting and targets can help with accessing PD.}

\textit{An opportunity to reflect on success and critique what’s not.}

Bernadette admits that there have been some good informal conversations with her senior manager, but viewed this as being supportive, not as appraisal. In contrast to the positives, the negative experiences of personal appraisal were identified by middle level leaders in this study as:

\textit{Having to write examples of all of the things we have done against the Professional standards at the end of the year.}
The whole process is too often treated as a “necessary evil” – no follow ups or real meaningful dialogue.

Can be repetitive from year to year. If it is not completed properly and valued by staff, it is pointless and a waste of time.

Likewise, respondents alluded to the lack of time to conduct their staff appraisals:

Always seems rushed as a process.

One middle level leader simply stated they felt like a:

Performing seal.

Bernadette, on her lack of personal appraisal, commented:

Well just the fact that they don’t really happen is quite negative.

An experienced overseas trained senior leader, who currently holds a middle management role feels underutilised and unchallenged, commented:

People who are well qualified and experienced but are managed by others who are less experienced or qualified … makes the interviewing process difficult at times when set simplistic inappropriate targets.

During the semi structured interviews, participants were asked how appraisal informs their professional development needs. All five interview participants believed it did not. Aidan concluded:

For middle leaders, a lot of PD is departmentalised; it’s not in terms of leadership, not in terms of management. It’s a shame really.

Andrea recounted:

When I have asked for some PD, I have been turned down because of costs, and that’s in terms of leadership development.
Similarly, Cordelia believes her professional development is self driven, and after ten years in her leadership role felt:

*A lot of trial and error, what works, what doesn’t, and I do ask other middle managers … and I find this more advantageous than going on a one day course.*

It is clear that professional development undertaken is curriculum based and there is an absence of leadership development which the participants find frustrating and disappointing. As a highly experienced middle level leader, Bernadette feels disappointed in the lack of leadership development, despite applying for senior management positions, stating:

*That should have flagged to them I am looking for a promotion … I’m wanting to be more than a middle manager yet they haven’t suggested I do a course, say, which would develop leadership qualities for senior management. I know I have a lot to offer.*

It is evident that there is a need for formal professional conversations with senior leaders to discuss leadership development and career progression. This is currently lacking and as a result, interview participants in this study feel undervalued. Cordelia recounts a time where she wanted to seek advice about some concerns in her department. Instead of support, she felt undervalued because of the time constraints and actions of her senior leader. She recollected:

*The answer was ‘we need to get through this appraisal fast, we don’t have time for this’. This left me feeling her I am trying to open up and have it slammed in my face and you start to think that it is really obvious that no one is concerned about the smaller details and that it is really sad.*

In summary, middle level leaders in this study discussed their successes in terms of the positive experiences of personal appraisal such as gaining positive student evaluations, feedback and affirmations from colleagues or their department. In contrast, the shortcomings of their personal appraisal were more forthcoming in
terms of the disappointments they have experienced overall. The common findings of the negative appraisal experiences were perceived as a tick box approach, a formality or not happening at all. Furthermore, it appears rushed; there are no follow up conversations or adequate time for conducting their teaching staff appraisals.

According to the five interview participants, when appraisal is not valued it is viewed as a pointless exercise, especially when appraisal objectives are easily met and not challenging. Whilst most middle level leaders undertake professional development, this is generally curriculum based. It is evident from the interview participants that leadership development is not provided. Furthermore, their appraisal is not informing their developmental needs. In the electronic questionnaire, only two respondents identified leadership development.

**Improving middle level leaders’ appraisal experiences**

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to make possible suggestions for improving appraisal experiences of middle level leaders. In addition, interview participants were asked to elaborate on suggested improvements.

Time was the most frequent suggestion to improve the appraisal experiences for middle level leaders in this study, with regards to its allocation and regularity:

- **Sufficient time must be allocated for the process to be effective and meaningful.**
- **Regular time allocated to staff to work on/reflect on their practice.**
- **May be more frequent but shorter lesson observations so observer gets a more true impression of what happens in the classroom.**

Furthermore, one middle level remarked:

- **SMT look too busy to engage into ongoing meaningful appraisal.**
Some middle level leaders believe that an overhaul of the current system whereby:

Reflection and development are the goals and improving the teaching, leading and learning capabilities of the middle leaders.

One middle level leader suggested school wide training and professional development would be useful to:

Show how to make it more meaningful, not just more paperwork. Tighter systems and a higher priority and value placed on it as a whole school system, where everyone gets the same message.

Some middle level leaders believe more importance should be placed on appraisal, particularly as:

An essential requirement to maintain high quality education.

We have some dud teachers in the system and they can still ‘hide’.

Teachers can ‘step up’ for one off lessons.

Three middle level leaders suggested linking appraisal with a type of performance pay:

Simply a way of recognising really good teachers and giving each teacher a scale to see improvement.

It doesn’t necessarily need to be results driven; it’s about you developing your practice, mentoring, coaching, and developing others.

The interview participants contributed their suggestions regarding potential improvements to their personal appraisal experiences. Aidan would like to see a more rigorous system in place with a more formalised line management system. Andrea has considered leadership development at post graduate level, despite those types of conversations not being held with her appraiser, yet:

People are now actually reluctant to ask for PD, we get told early on in the year that there is no more money.
Bernadette and Beatrice both stressed the importance of formal professional conversations. Receiving feedback from faculty members, firm deadlines, external observations, alongside a regular monthly meeting designated time with the appraiser to discuss faculty matters, career progression and professional development would be ideal according to Bernadette because:

*If you are in the mind-set of having a regular meeting time, it works.*

Cordelia noted the current lack of interaction between senior and middle management, despite the intention that appraisal is an ongoing process. Her solution would be:

*More interaction with the senior management day to day, with them being more visible.*

Overall, middle level leaders in this study provided several suggestions on potential improvements to enhance their appraisal experiences, including the idea of having some form of performance pay. However, the most common finding was the need for quality time to conduct staff appraisals. In this study, middle level leaders believe that if sufficient time was allocated, on a regular basis, for conducting staff appraisals and reflective practice, the appraisal process would become meaningful. Furthermore, if quality time was given to them, they would be more likely to feel valued and important. Engaging in regular, ongoing professional conversations with senior managers was another common thread identified as an immediate improvement. Moreover, interview participants indicated that they would like leadership development opportunities to develop them personally and professionally. Formalising the line management structure whereby senior leaders are designated departments and work closely with their middle level leaders was also suggested.

**Appraisal experiences of middle level leaders: Key Findings**

In summary, the appraisal experiences differed from the espoused appraisal process outlined by each school. Whilst the schools outline the process as regular and ongoing, the focus is actually on the expectation that paperwork such as the
Professional Standards and ‘Appraisal Reports’ will be completed and submitted to the principal or senior leader accordingly.

As a result, the data from this study showed that middle level leaders’ appraisal experiences are minimal, non existent or a tick box exercise for compliance. Although middle level leaders in this study highlight their experiences as being evaluative and reflective on the surface, perhaps they are evaluative and reflective when completing their ‘Appraisal Report’. Findings from the five interview participants highlighted several gaps in their appraisal experiences.

Generally, descriptions of the positive experiences of appraisal respondents focused on positive student evaluations and informal conversations with staff. Overall, the positive experiences were minimal, perhaps because appraisal is perceived as merely a compliance exercise. On the other hand, the negative experiences were plentiful. If middle level leaders are appraised at all, it is perceived as being rushed, left to the last minute, without any formal professional conversations. Lack of time for conducting their teaching staff appraisals, unsuitable objectives and a lack of leadership development were all highlighted as being negative. Their appraisal is not viewed as informing professional development; instead, development is directed at the department level and usually led by middle level leaders. Middle level leaders in this study do not meet regularly with their appraiser, set deep appraisal objectives, engage in productive dialogue nor receive appraisal training for conducting appraisals. Furthermore, their experiences, if they happen at all, do not impact on their teaching, learning and leading nor develop them professionally or personally.

In this study, middle level leaders felt that appraisal could be improved by allocating quality time to conduct staff appraisals. Regular, formal professional conversations with senior leaders could build and strengthen relationships between senior and middle leaders and strengthen the line management hierarchy. Discussing leadership development was also identified as a way of enhancing middle level leaders’ appraisal overall.
The Challenges of Effective Appraisal for Middle Level Leaders

Possible challenges hindering effective appraisal are highlighted under the following headings: conflicting purposes of appraisal; unclear job descriptions; lack of personal appraisal from senior leaders; lack of time and lack of training to conduct staff appraisals. These challenges act as barriers for middle level leaders undertaking their middle leadership role.

Conflicting purposes of appraisal

The conflicting purposes of appraisal create a challenge for middle level leaders. Appraisal is viewed as a compliance exercise by respondents in this study, rather than a development opportunity:

*It is seen as another requirement to tick off rather than a professional learning tool.*

*Introduced late in the year … done at department level, not school wide which devalues it.*

*At our level, it’s ticking boxes. I don’t think anybody ever says you are weak at this, what can we do to help you?*

The emphasis on completing the ‘Appraisal Report’ reinforced the purpose of appraisal is a tick box exercise for compliance, rather than an evaluative process. Appraisal is focused at department level, as opposed to school wide. Despite the expectation that middle level leaders appraise and develop their own staff, their own experiences are perceived as a compliance exercise. Instead, middle level leaders in this study suggested:

*Make the appraisal system mean something … not just something we have to do to tick the boxes.*

*This should certainly be an ongoing process and not something to be completed twice a year.*
I see appraisal as being a mentored, master teacher programme more than a punitive, accountability system of the administration checking up on teachers.

You need people who are conducting appraisals to be someone who can inspire and knows what it takes to develop these people.

It is evident that middle level leaders want an appraisal that is meaningful with ongoing mentoring, development and inspiration.

**Lack of effective personal appraisal**

Senior leaders have responsibility for appraising middle level leaders. However, recurring evidence from the questionnaire findings highlighted that middle level leaders in this study have experienced a tick box appraisal, rather than a meaningful appraisal. Some respondents commented that they had not been appraised for seven years. Interview participants confirmed these views, commenting on the lack of attention given to their own appraisal by senior leaders. This was further exacerbated by the expectation that although middle level leaders appraise a number of teaching staff, they do not receive a meaningful personal appraisal.

Andrea summarised her frustrations regarding the lack of personal appraisal:

> The thing that I find strange is that we have this example from the top down as it shouldn’t be, yet we are meant to deliver appraisal, carry out appraisal with our departments.

Aidan emphasised his lack of personal appraisal, leading him to comment on the need for senior leaders to:

> Oversee middle leaders, to push the middle leaders to do better because teaching and learning does suffer when appraisal systems are poor.

Bernadette leads a large department. In turn, she delegates some of her appraisals of staff to her assistant leaders. They work collaboratively to ensure transparency, openness and professionalism. For both Bernadette and Beatrice, however, it is frustrating when they are not provided with the same personal appraisal.
opportunities. Bernadette revealed that the annual BOT report and interview with the principal and senior management team which runs for two to three hours is more productive than her own appraisal:

I probably get more feedback in terms of my own performance, and where I would like to go and where I would like to take the faculty at that interview.

Cordelia made a poignant point regarding the appraisals she undertakes with her own department in relation to the lack of personal appraisal she experienced:

I suppose I learn what is not happening with me and take that through myself.

It is evident that Cordelia would like similar time and effort given to her personal appraisal that she gives to her own teaching staff as an appraiser.

Unclear job descriptions

The electronic questionnaire required middle level leaders to comment on whether their job description reflects their current leadership role and whether they perceived the school to be performing in this area.

All the middle level leaders in this study agreed that their job description reflects their current leadership role. Of the 26 respondents, 17 perceived that their school is performing well in this area. However, some respondents’ comments highlighted deficiencies in terms of relevance and clarity:

The leadership roles are not highlighted or utilised as they could be.

Job descriptions are possibly a little vague. Actually, they are seldom referred to and never revised after the appointment.

Sometimes I do things that are nowhere on my job description, I’m like a trouble shooter who has to rise to challenges I’m given and find solutions.

I have not currently got a specific one for my role, just the generic middle manager one.
A job description has only recently been set up ... essentially created because of an ERO visit this year.

It is evident that in some cases, there are disparities between the job description and the leadership role and responsibilities they undertake. One middle level leader remarked:

I am expected to develop my own specific job description as part of my appraisal this year.

One middle level leader positively commented:

I have been able to alter the job description since I started to reflect new trends. Some of the work has been taken on by assistant HOD as numbers of people in the department increased making it difficult for me to adequately address all areas.

Lack of time and lack of training to conduct staff appraisal

Comments made by respondents and participants highlighted the lack of time and lack of training to conduct staff appraisal which remains a predominant issue for middle level leaders in this study.

Of the 26 middle level leaders surveyed, 16 felt that their school provided them with quality time to conduct staff appraisals. One middle level remarked:

As a core HOD we have been given a lot of non contact time. It is for this reason I feel it is important that appraisal is conducted by me rather than palmed off.

Although time is made available for observations, 10 middle level leaders in this study felt that their school does not provide adequate time. Comments suggested that the appraisal process is time consuming:

There is pressure on us to carry out classroom observations in non contact time. No account is taken of follow up meetings.
Teachers do paper work in their own time. It’s always a shuffle and a huge workload.

This doesn’t take into account the pre observation meetings to set goals, post observation feedback and the completion of attestation documentation.

Cover can be made available but then work has to be set and marked.

Interview participants reiterated that the key challenge as simply:

Time! People are way too busy. One of the main setbacks is time.

Appraisal training for conducting staff appraisals was perceived as being important by half of the respondents. However, 17 middle level leaders in this study believed that their school is not performing well in this area. Comments suggested that appraisal training has not been offered for holding difficult conversations which may arise during the appraisal:

We presumably work it out for ourselves based on our own experiences of appraisal in the past, no matter what that model has been.

This is rarely discussed. Appraisal is left to the individual departments to work out.

Beatrice emphasised the fact that if training was provided school wide, then people would perhaps value appraisal, especially:

If the purposes; practice and processes were unpacked school wide.

One middle level leader felt that senior leaders avoid appraising them because of their own lack of appraisal expertise:

The senior managers of the school are not confident about the process. This is evident in the lack of discussion concerning the appraisal process.
**The challenges of effective appraisal for middle level leaders: Key Findings**

In summary, a lack of time and a lack of training to conduct staff appraisals were the most significant challenges identified by a significant number of middle level leaders in this study. Although 16 middle level leaders acknowledged that they receive extra non contact time above teachers, they felt that this was still inadequate to fulfil the requirements such as classroom observations, follow up meetings, formal conversations, let alone the numerous administrative tasks required. Leadership development and appraisal training have not been offered, in areas such as holding difficult conversations.

The second key challenge for middle level leaders is the lack of personal appraisal, especially in light of the numerous staff they appraise annually. This creates tension and frustration as senior management do not model effective appraisal. Formal professional conversations, in turn, do not occur and middle level leaders in this study are left to lead through trial and error, seeking advice from their colleagues on an informal basis. Furthermore, middle level leaders’ development and career aspirations and progression are not adequately addressed because these formal professional conversations are not happening.

Although all respondents felt that their job description reflects their current leadership role, the comments suggested that their job descriptions are still unclear. For many respondents, their comments suggested that their job description provide a vague outline of tasks which does not utilise their strengths. Some middle level leaders do not ever refer to their job description once they are appointed to their leadership role. Some middle level leaders alluded to the numerous additional tasks that they undertake which are not highlighted on their job description. A review of middle level leaders’ job descriptions are one expectation outlined in the appraisal process for School A and B, yet there is little evidence that this occurs.

Finally, the conflicting purposes of appraisal are a challenge for middle level leaders. The main purpose of appraisal is perceived by many middle level leaders as
compliance. Whilst the accountability purpose of appraisal is addressed, the developmental purpose remains inadequate.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present the findings which revealed that there is an imbalance between schools’ espoused personnel policies and appraisal in practice. Middle level leaders in this study perceived that their personal appraisal experiences are unproductive, rushed and predominantly for compliance. Leadership development and appraisal training is not forthcoming. On the other hand, middle level leaders identified increasing role demands which include the appraisal and development of their teaching staff. In this study, middle level leaders identified a number of challenges, including a lack of time to enact these expectations. The following chapter presents the discussion of findings, integrated with the literature from Chapter Two.
Chapter Five

Discussion of Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the discussion of findings, which are integrated with the literature, under the following headings: the role of middle level leaders; the importance of middle level leaders’ appraisal; appraisal experiences of middle level leaders; and the challenges of effective appraisal of middle level leaders.

The Role of Middle Level Leaders

Of the 26 middle level leaders in this study, 16 respondents perceived their role to be rewarding. However, key findings from this research are consistent with messages in the literature which highlight the complexities and challenges associated with the role of middle level leaders. The 26 middle level leaders in this study have a dual role of teaching as well as leading. This correlates with literature by Fitzgerald (2000), Blandford (2006) and Dinham (2007) who assert that middle leaders have acquired a leadership role in addition to their teaching demands. In this study, 21 middle level leaders identified their role as being multifaceted, listing a comprehensive set of curriculum and administrative tasks. This research highlights that many middle level leaders identified that their roles, expectations and responsibilities are demanding, over half of the respondents felt overworked. This finding is evident in research conducted by Chetty (2007) and Peak (2010) who conclude that middle level leaders’ role is diverse, complicated and demanding. Increased administrative tasks have resulted in many middle level leaders in this study indicating that they complete their curriculum planning, marking and reporting in their own time. This finding matches research by Adey (2000) and Wise and Bennett (2003) who emphasise the changing role and demands of middle level leaders.
In this study, half of the middle level leaders located themselves between their department and senior management, yet only six respondents perceived that they are supported by senior leaders and five respondents felt influential in their role. Perhaps this is because they are “neither part of the senior management team nor are they solely teachers” (Fitzgerald, 2000, p. 5). This finding is contrary to messages by Dinham (2007), Cardno (2012) and the Ministry of Education (2012) who highlight the influential roles middle level leaders have as pedagogical leaders. According to Fitzgerald and Gunter (2008) leadership is viewed as a purposeful activity, yet in this study many respondents felt undervalued. Although leadership is delegated to them, they perceived that the power to influence has not been similarly distributed, a finding reflected in the research conducted by Fitzgerald and Gunter (2008).

Middle level leaders in this study indicated that they have, on average, six staff members in their department. There is an expectation from senior management that they will appraise and develop their staff. As a result, many middle level leaders felt pulled between departmental and senior management expectations (Feist, 2008; Fitzgerald, 2008). Several middle level leaders in this study perceived that the priority of appraisal is focused downwards, not upwards. Paradoxically, middle level leaders are expected to appraise and develop their staff, yet felt that they do not receive effective appraisal or development from senior leaders.

Thus, although most middle level leaders in this study perceived their role to be rewarding and multifaceted, the majority of respondents in this study felt that they were neither influential nor supported by senior leaders.

**The Purposes and Importance of Middle Level Leaders’ Appraisal**

*Policy*

In this study, the personnel policy for each school generically outlines appraisal, stating its purpose is to improve teaching staff’s performance on an annual basis, with the aim of improved student outcomes. Appraisal is inextricably linked to professional development, in that the former should inform the latter. Specific
mention of middle level leaders’ appraisal or who should appraise them is not evident in each personnel policy. The lack of prominence of middle level leaders implies that very little significance, at school level, is accorded to targeting them or even acknowledging their hierarchical position above teachers. This identified gap in each school’s personnel policy is contrary to a national document released by the Ministry of Education (2012) that recognises the importance of middle level leaders as having the greatest influence on teaching, leading and learning. Thus, there is a notion that middle level leaders could be specifically acknowledged and targeted within school personnel policy.

Appraisal in practice

In this study, middle level leaders recognised that there are multiple purposes of appraisal, ranging from self improvement, improving student teaching and learning and informing professional development through to attestation and for compliance. However, 16 respondents viewed the main purpose of their personal appraisal in practice as predominantly an accountability measure for compliance. Middlewood (2002) and Cardno (2012) argue that appraisal’s dual purpose is accountability and development. Senior leaders were identified by middle level leaders in this study as having responsibility for their personal appraisals. However, many middle level leaders viewed that the purpose of their appraisal to be for compliance, not their development. The implication is that an imbalance exists for middle level leaders in this study who felt that whilst they are held accountable through ticking boxes for compliance; they are not being developed by senior leaders. This is consistent with research conducted by Chetty (2007) who concluded that from middle level leaders’ perspectives, they were not receiving leadership development nor being effectively appraised. This also mirrors literature spanning two decades which highlights the ongoing tension between the purposes of appraisal as bureaucratic control for compliance rather than professionalism for autonomy (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008; Youngs & Grootenboer, 2003). On one hand, many middle level leaders in this study felt that their approach to staff appraisal is professional, a finding that reflects a view formed by the OECD review team (Nusche et al., 2012) that “New Zealand teachers
are generally perceived as trusted professionals” (p. 75). On the other hand, middle level leaders thought that their personal appraisal was anything but professional.

Of the 26 respondents, 16 middle level leaders in this study agreed that their school clearly articulates the purposes of appraisal, although this was mentioned in terms of the appraisal process rather than its purpose. This finding reflects evidence in the research conducted by Gratton (2004) which showed that whilst the appraisal process was explained, “the purpose was not well conveyed” (p. 294). Moreland (2009) advocates, that when schools clearly convey the purposes of appraisal, the process is more likely to be valued. However, findings in this study showed that whilst many purposes may be articulated, in practice, little value is actually placed on effectively appraising middle level leaders.

Although all the middle level leaders in this study believed appraisal should be a key focus in the school, they felt that little importance, if any, is placed on their personal appraisal. In comparison, conducting staff appraisals was identified as a key role by many respondents in this study, highlighting a paradox between the lack of attention paid to their personal appraisal by their senior leader and the importance they placed on appraising staff in their departments. Despite middle level leaders acknowledging that appraisal may potentially improve teaching, leading and learning; over half perceived this to be ineffective due to the compliance nature of their appraisal. This matches findings by Fitzgerald (2001) who asserts that when appraisal is at a minimal compliance level, “potential improvement in teacher performance and student learning is difficult” (p. 123).

This research reveals that most middle level leaders viewed formal, ongoing professional conversations as being a significant benefit of appraisal, yet over half of the respondents perceived that these conversations do not happen formally. This finding mirrors messages by Middlewood and Cardno (2001) who state: “the giving and receiving of feedback is fundamental and the purpose is to focus on performance with the aim of achieving stretch or challenge” (p. 11). Without dialogue and feedback, the development possibilities remain unfulfilled, which created a
tension for many middle level leaders in this study who felt that they are undervalued, undeveloped and unsupported in their role. This finding differs from Blandford (2006) who acknowledges the need to balance accountability and development demands. Moreover, Brundrett and Rhodes (2011) state that accountability needs to be managed in a way that ensures individual, departmental and organisational development needs are satisfied, as they are more likely to feel recognised and valued. Conversely, the majority of middle level leaders in this study do not feel supported, valued or influential within the current appraisal system. Thus, the middle level leaders in this study perceived that their personal appraisal is an undervalued practice.

**Appraisal Experiences of Middle Level Leaders**

In this study, key findings showed the schools’ espoused appraisal processes differ from middle level leaders’ actual appraisal experiences.

**Appraisal process**

Each school outlines the appraisal process in terms of three stages: an initial meeting, the data collection stage and a final meeting to complete and discuss the ‘Appraisal Report’ which is filled in by both the appraiser and appraisee. Each school outlines the appraisal process as regular and ongoing, yet the focus appears to be on the paperwork, namely the relevant Professional Standards and ‘Appraisal Report’. Once completed, these are submitted to the senior leader or principal accordingly.

The ‘Appraisal Report’ uses terms of evaluation, attestation, expectations and performance review to denote the activity of appraisal. The appraiser and appraisee are expected to reflect on successes and areas of improvement, as well as commenting on individual and departmental goals, plus professional development undertaken and requested. The expectation that teachers undertake professional development which is informed from their appraisal, reflects messages in Collins’ (1996) and Fitzgerald’s (2001) research, observing that schools have inextricably
linked appraisal and professional development. Whilst School C provides an HOD ‘Performance Review Booklet’ for their middle level leaders to complete, School A and B do not differentiate between teachers and middle level leaders in the appraisal process, other than the requirement that middle level leaders discuss their job description at the final meeting.

In this study, middle level leaders identified that their personal appraisal focuses on a check list assessment against Professional Standards. This finding is evident in the research offered by Fitzgerald (2008) who believes teachers are increasingly assessed against criteria and professional standards to review, judge performance and attestation. The inference is that whilst the schools in this study may review and evaluate, it is evident that the key focus is actually on assessing against Professional Standards. Forrester (2011) questions whether this type of performance management, as an audit mechanism for improvement, is actually a milestone or a burden? In this study, many middle level leaders perceive the latter to be applicable. Current appraisal is viewed by middle level leaders in this study as a burdensome compliance exercise, particularly as their development remains unaddressed.

During the initial meeting, there is an expectation that the appraiser and appraisee mutually agree on individual and departmental objectives. In this study, over half of the middle level leaders indicated that they do not set deep objectives. This finding is evident in the research conducted by Sinnema and Robinson (2007) who state because of the “perfunctory and compliance oriented nature of teacher evaluation” (p. 337), there is a prevalence of ambiguous rather than specific and challenging goals set by teachers.

One gap highlighted in the schools’ appraisal process was the lack of attention given to recognising the impact middle level leaders have on teaching, learning and leading. This finding is consistent with research conducted by Sinnema and Robinson (2007) who assert that whilst national and school policies espouse purposes of improving teaching and student learning, evidence shows there is “low priority to using student learning or achievement as a criterion” (p. 337). This is evident within the ‘Appraisal Report’ and relevant Professional Standards to be used
alongside RTC which has much more of a focus on the reflective practitioner. However, as middle level leaders in this study are both teachers and leaders, no dimension specifically focuses on middle level leadership. Subsequently, RTC is an additional requirement and perhaps is why only half of the middle level leaders in this study utilise them.

There is an expectation that middle level leaders appraise and develop their teaching staff, yet the schools’ appraisal process does not offer specific appraisal training or leadership development. Sinnema and Robinson (2007) advocate a system which promotes teachers’ inquiry of their teaching within the context of their students, to improve outcomes. Middle level leaders in this study identified as both teachers and leaders, highlighting a tension between each role. This is evident in messages by Busher and Harris (2000) who assert that middle level leaders are involved in a “complex switching of roles and lines of accountability between different aspects of their work” (p. 105). This role conflict is evident in literature by Bush (2002b) who asserts that the demands from senior managers and their teaching staff, create pressure for middle level leaders. Although most middle level leaders felt that the staff appraisals they conduct are of significant importance, many acknowledged that the paperwork is onerous; it is time consuming and they are unsure of its direct impact on improved student outcomes. This finding is evident in research conducted by Youngs and Grootenboer (2003) who established that it is difficult to prove the impact appraisal has on student achievement.

Once the ‘Appraisal Report’ is submitted to the principal, there is no further evidence required to show that the process has been undertaken effectively, other than a signature from both the appraiser and appraisee. Piggot-Irvine (2003) urges that the “process should be developed with a genuine intent for improvement and not check-listing alone” (p. 175). This view is supported by Middlewood and Cardno (2001) who suggest that when the improvement component is overlooked, appraisal tends to become just a “mechanism for check listing that minimum criteria have been met” (p. 11). This research indicates that middle level leaders’ improvement and development are perceived as being overlooked by senior leaders in the appraisal process.
Thus, specific appraisal training and middle level leadership development that links reflective practice with building the capacity of teachers and leaders could be included within the school’s appraisal process and enacted in practice. Using an inquiry based reflective appraisal approach, Sinnema and Robinson (2007) argue, leads towards impacting on teaching, leading and learning. Rather than a focus on paperwork required for compliance, more attention could be given to the development of middle level leaders.

Appraisal in practice

In this research, most middle level leaders conducted student surveys and classroom observations, and were given timeframes for completing appraisals. However, positive experiences of appraisal were limited. It is inferred that these experiences are limited because for many, the focus of their personal appraisal is merely a tick box exercise, without any appraisal dialogue at all. As a result, middle level leaders in this study felt disappointed. This finding matches research by Sinnema and Robinson (2007) who concluded that people will not be motivated “by teacher evaluation processes that check teachers’ performance of preferred practices rather than their impact on students” (p. 338). In this study, it is evident that there is a focus on the completion of the ‘Appraisal Report’, as opposed to an effective appraisal which is ongoing, reflective and reciprocal. Although 20 middle level leaders indicated their appraisal experiences were reflective and 14 respondents indicated they were evaluative and confidential, it could be conjectured that they were either referring to themselves as the appraiser, or they were referring to the honest reflections they completed as an appraisee in their ‘Appraisal Report’.

In contrast to the positives, in this study, there was an abundance of negative experiences described. Mather and Seifert (2011) assert that appraisal has been promoted as a means of delivering improvement, yet findings in this study showed that when middle level leaders are appraised, there is a tendency for it to be rushed, left to the last minute and lacking in formal professional conversations which Middlewood (1997) believes can affect “attitudes towards appraisal and thereby its effectiveness” (p. 182). Many middle level levels felt frustrated at the lack of personal
appraisal, especially in light of the fact that they prioritise and conduct meaningful appraisals with their own staff.

Cardno (2001) advocates appraisal may be a “vehicle for professional dialogue about improving performance” (p. 144), yet in this study, over half of the middle level leaders indicated that they do not meet regularly with their appraiser nor do they engage in productive dialogue. Although many middle level leaders valued the informal conversations they have with colleagues, several middle level leaders identified the need for formalised, regular and ongoing professional conversations with senior leaders. Bradbury (2001) emphasises appraisal dialogue as crucial, yet evidence from this research indicated that middle level leaders’ appraisal dialogue is lacking. Kemp and Nathan (1995) propose that these constructive discussions help build interpersonal relationships, and allow for career progression and future development to be identified. Accordingly, whilst many middle level leaders in this study perceived that they have formal appraisal conversations with their staff, these types of discussions do not occur with senior leaders. This is contrary to Cardno’s (2012) assertion that “by working with and through other colleagues that leaders achieve goals and attend to the problems that beset goal achievement” (p. 32).

Not one middle level leader in this study indicated that they had received appraisal training and many respondents felt the time allocated for conducting appraisals was inadequate. This finding mirrors conclusions in the research conducted by Chetty (2007) regarding the challenges of lack of time, training and personal appraisal. Therefore, middle level leaders in this study felt that their appraisal could be more meaningful. Quality time to conduct staff appraisal was a significant proposition offered by respondents. This matches messages by Kemp and Nathan (1995), Piggot-Irvine (2003) and Blandford (2006) who assert effective appraisal takes time.

Over half of the middle level leaders in this study perceived that their experiences do not impact on their teaching, learning and leading or develop them personally. Likewise, they believe professional development undertaken is generally curriculum based and self driven, raising the concern that their appraisal is not informing their leadership development needs. This research indicated that many middle level
leaders believed the identification and implementation of appropriate leadership
development could enhance their personal appraisal experiences overall. This
finding supports the Ministry of Education (2012) who advocate the importance of
developing middle level leaders because of their pivotal pedagogical positions. Adey
(2000) corroborates this, stressing the importance of developing middle level leaders
to carry out their roles effectively.

Thus, middle level leaders felt that their appraisal experiences are ineffective. To
ensure the appraisal process is meaningful, in practice, quality time, regular formal
conversations with senior leaders and middle leadership opportunities are needed.

The Challenges of Effective Appraisal for Middle Level Leaders

The challenges identified by middle level leaders in this study regarding effective
appraisal are discussed under the following headings: lack of time and training to
conduct staff appraisals; lack of effective personal appraisal; unclear job
descriptions; and the conflicting purposes of appraisal.

Lack of time and training to conduct staff appraisals

A lack of time and a lack of training to conduct effective staff appraisal were the
leading challenges identified by many middle level leaders in this study. This finding
correlates with research conducted by Chetty (2007), Dinham (2007) and Peak
(2010) who conclude that workloads of middle level leaders have intensified and are
increasingly challenging. Although half of the middle level leaders in this study
acknowledged the extra non contact time they receive above teachers, many
indicated that classroom observations; follow up meetings; completion of paper work;
and formal appraisal conversations create additional burdens on workloads.
Furthermore, the findings showed that middle level leaders’ allocated and personal
non contact time is taken up with administrative tasks. Consequently, personal
planning, marking and reporting occur in their own time. This finding is consistent
with messages in the research conducted by Fitzgerald (2009) and Peak (2010) who
assert middle level leaders are progressively spending more time with administrative
responsibilities. Whilst middle level leaders in this study recognised the importance of conducting their staff appraisals, many recognised that the intensified workloads and a lack of time made this difficult. This finding is reflected in research conducted by Chetty (2007) and Fitzgerald (2009) that highlight neither time nor training have been forthcoming for middle level leaders.

Most respondents in this study highlighted a lack of training to conduct staff appraisal as a key challenge. Adey (2000) contends that not only do middle level leaders face increased pressures to manage, lead and develop their staff; little attention is given to their leadership training and development, indicating one of the predominant challenges for middle level leaders is “monitoring and evaluating [pupils and] staff and, on the basis of this, taking action to address identified problems” (p. 424). Having difficult conversations with staff requires specific training in dilemma management, a view endorsed by various authors (Cardno, 2012; Gratton, 2004; Sinnema & Robinson, 2007). Middle level leaders in this study felt inadequately prepared to hold productive conversations and indicated that they have relied on previous experiences. This emphasises the need for leadership development to be provided for middle level leaders in this study, especially as only two respondents indicated they had undertaken leadership development.

Thus, principals are urged to address the lack of time and lack of training to conduct staff appraisals, by identifying, prioritising and supporting middle level leaders to undertake their key role and responsibilities. Piggot-Irvine (2003) argues that until substantially more specific training is provided and the lack of time is resolved, there will be “not only highly stressed staff in schools but also poorly implemented approaches” (p. 176). Research by the OECD (Nusche et al., 2012) reiterate that appraisers need training to undertake appraisal.

Lack of effective personal appraisal

Evidence suggests that many middle level leaders in this study perceived that their appraisal by senior leaders is ineffective, if it happens at all. When a school’s espoused process is not effectively implemented in practice, Cardno (2001) believes
that appraisal may remain a “highly symbolic goal” (p. 144). In this study, rather than reflective, ongoing appraisal processes espoused by schools in their personnel policy, middle level leaders described their experiences in terms of disappointments. Many middle level leaders in this study deemed that senior leaders revert to a compliance focused appraisal that is rushed, minimal and simplistic. This finding is evident in the research conducted by Fitzgerald et al. (2003), who concluded that leaders may revert to simplistic appraisal approaches because of the extra responsibilities they have. Consequently, respondents felt that senior leaders avoid engaging in formal professional conversations and do not attend to their development.

Piggot-Irvine (2003) argues that when people are faced with problems, they may avoid them rather than confronting issues as being in the too hard basket. The moment problems become potentially threatening, productive reasoning may be replaced with defensiveness (Argyris, 1977). Defensiveness, Argyris (1977) argues, inhibits the ability of an individual and its organisation to genuinely transform. Subsequently, he coined the term ‘double bind’ to describe the ways people hide errors and camouflage the fact that they are error hiding. These self sealing filters (Bolman & Deal, 2008) may exist when espoused processes differ from actual practice. Cardno (2001) reiterates that people may adopt defensive routines, during the appraisal process and this defensiveness “leads us to making decisions about what we will or will not say so that we are protected from the response of others, or so that we protect others whether they wish us to or not” (p. 149). During the semi structured interviews, three participants were clearly anxious about describing their perception of their appraisal honestly; alluding to the fact they hoped they would not lose their job. All five interview participants perceived that their senior leaders were not role modelling appraisal as it should be enacted.

Thus there is compelling evidence in this study that middle level leaders believed that their current appraisal experiences are ineffective, and considered that senior leaders avoid formal professional conversations. Senior leaders could be made accountable to the principal so as to ensure middle level leaders receive appraisal which is valued, productive and empowering.
Unclear job descriptions

Although all of middle level leaders in this study agreed that their job description reflects their current leadership role, their comments were contradictory, stating that their job descriptions are vague, not referred to or, as one middle level leader cynically commented, created specifically for an ERO visit. This finding matches research conducted by Chetty (2007) who concluded that many middle level leaders do not have a clear job description. Cardno (2012) contends that difficulties arise when a job description is absent or unclear, as it becomes problematic when assessing and evaluating expectations alongside performance.

Thus, job descriptions of middle level leaders need to clearly and accurately reflect the negotiated role, responsibilities and requirements of middle level leaders (Blandford, 2006). The Ministry of Education (2012) advocates the need for job descriptions to be negotiated between the principal and middle level leaders, to allow opportunities for them to evolve and to utilise their strengths.

Conflicting purposes of appraisal

In this study, the conflicting purposes of appraisal for middle level leaders were identified as a challenge. The findings in this study confirm messages in the literature by Forrester (2011) who warns that when appraisal has a tick box mentality, there is a decline in trust and value in the process. Many middle level leaders in this study felt that because the main purpose of their own appraisal was an accountability measure, little attention was given to formal professional conversations and their development. Middlewood and Cardno (2001) emphasise the importance of the “appraiser and appraisee to engage in open and honest dialogue about performance” (p. 13), yet the evidence in this study highlights the lack of dialogue and lack of development. This is further exacerbated because schools’ espouse that appraisal should inform developmental needs to ensure individual and organisational goals are satisfied (Blandford, 2006).
Thus, principals could be encouraged to clearly articulate the multiple purposes of middle level leaders’ appraisal in the school’s personnel policy, appraisal process and appraisal in practice.

**Summary**

In this chapter the discussion of findings were presented, integrated with the literature. The findings in this research reveal that although middle level leaders should hold a pivotal teaching and middle leadership role within their school, they perceive themselves to be undervalued, unsupported and not influential. Their personal appraisal is ineffective. Conclusions and recommendations are presented in the following chapter.
Chapter Six

Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The impetus for conducting this research stems from the fact that after ten years as a middle level leader, I have yet to experience a meaningful appraisal. Appraisal’s dual purposes of accountability and development (Middlewood & Cardno, 2001) have the potential to benefit both the individual and the organisation. However, research conducted by Chetty (2007) indicates that middle level leaders do not receive effective appraisal or adequate leadership training. This study investigated the appraisal of middle level leaders in three New Zealand secondary schools in terms of the purposes, importance and effectiveness of their personal appraisal with the aim of identifying possible improvements to enhance their appraisal experiences.

The purpose of this chapter is to present conclusions, offer recommendations, identify strengths and limitations of this study and signal areas for further research. Conclusions are presented under the following headings: an undervalued practice; an ineffective practice; and making appraisal meaningful: changing values and practice. These addressed the three research questions:

1. Why is performance appraisal of middle level leaders important in New Zealand secondary schools?

2. What are the current performance appraisal purposes and experiences of middle level leaders in New Zealand secondary schools in terms of what constitutes effective appraisal?

3. How can schools improve the performance appraisal experiences of middle level leaders in New Zealand secondary schools?
Conclusions

An Undervalued Practice

The findings conclude that middle level leaders in this study perceived their role to be rewarding, multifaceted and demanding. Their role comprised of a comprehensive set of curriculum and administrative tasks, including leading curriculum delivery and change, staff appraisal, and developing staff professionally. Although middle level leaders should have a pivotal position within the organisation, both as teachers and leaders, most middle level leaders in this study did not feel influential or supported by senior management.

In this study, the findings indicated an inconsistency between schools’ espoused personnel policies and appraisal in practice. The schools’ personnel policies outline the purpose of appraisal is to improve staff performance in order to improve student outcomes. Appraisal should also inform their professional development needs. However in practice, many middle level leaders in this study perceived there to be conflicting purposes of appraisal. Although they identified the purposes of appraisal as self improvement, informing professional development and attestation, many perceived the main purpose of their personal appraisal to be focused on accountability for compliance. Compliance stems from bureaucratic measures mandated by national policy (Fitzgerald, 2001), which Cardno (2001) asserts, may be destructive and unhelpful. In this study, most appraisal practice is associated with the compliance aspect of accountability, at the detriment of development. This highlighted an imbalance between accountability and development. In order to address this imbalance, it is important that the purposes of middle level leaders’ personal appraisal address both accountability and development.

Middle level leaders in this study recognised the importance of appraisal, however they felt little importance is placed on their personal appraisal. Many middle level leaders highlighted the benefit of ongoing, regular and formal professional conversations with senior leaders, being mentored in their role and undertaking leadership development and appraisal training which cater explicitly for their
demanding role. Instead, once they move into a middle level role, many felt they were trusted with the job and are left to it, relying on previous experiences.

To ensure that middle level leaders are recognised within the school hierarchy, it is imperative that their appraisal experiences are purposeful and valued. The Ministry of Education (2012) asserts that middle level leaders have influential positions within schools to drive curriculum change and innovation. Therefore, the schools’ personnel policies need to reflect this by explicitly acknowledging and targeting middle level leaders and the multiple purposes of their appraisal.

**An Ineffective Practice**

Middle level leaders in this study perceived that their personal appraisal is ineffective. Whilst each school provides generic appraisal processes, middle level leaders indicated that their appraisers, namely senior leaders, focus solely on the compliance aspect of accountability, if at all. Development remains unattended.

Each school’s appraisal process in this study outlined the expectation that objectives are set, classroom observations are conducted and student surveys are completed. Alongside this, an assessment of performance against the relevant Professional Standards and an ‘Appraisal Report’ must be filled in and returned to the senior leader or principal. In this study, many middle level leaders viewed the assessment of performance against a set of Professional Standards to be the key focus of their appraisal, rather than an evaluation. Only one school in this study provides a specific HOD appraisal booklet. This finding highlighted a gap in the schools’ appraisal process for middle level leaders in this study.

Consequently, in practice middle level leaders’ appraisal experiences are rushed, left to the last minute, or even worse, not happening at all. Moreover, while most middle level leaders in this study are in agreement regarding appraisal’s ability to positively impact on teaching, leading and learning, they strongly believed that current appraisal practices do not. Likewise, over half of the middle level leaders in this
study did not set deep objectives nor engaged in formal professional conversations with senior leaders. Instead, middle level leaders felt that senior leaders revert to ticking boxes. Fitzgerald (2008) argues that professionalism encourages autonomy, empowerment and expertise, yet current experiences of many middle level leaders in this study highlighted that their appraisal is anything but professional.

This was further exacerbated by the perception that whilst middle level leaders believed they take a professional approach with their staff, their own appraisal is predominantly for compliance. Paradoxically, although there is an expectation that middle level leaders conduct numerous staff appraisals, little importance is placed on their own. This study identified that a significant aspect of the middle level leaders’ role is to appraise and develop staff. This requires building relationships of trust and transparency, alongside being allocated adequate time and training. However, not one middle level leader identified that appraisal training had been provided.

Although professional conversations are highlighted by Middlewood and Cardno (2001) as vital for effective appraisal, many middle level leaders in this study commonly referred to the lack of formal conversations with senior leaders. Cardno (2012) recognises the difficulties in having productive conversations, particularly surrounding the inherently anxiety provoking arena of appraisal. Opportunities to gain leadership development in productive dialogue remain critical, yet in this study, only two middle level leaders revealed that leadership development had been forthcoming. According to Middlewood and Cardno (2001), productive dialogue allows for identification of professional and leadership development, opportunity to examine areas of strength and weakness and the potential to openly discuss dilemmas that may arise. Cardno (2012) asserts “the key activity that must occur is dialogue at all points of enacting the system” (p. 95). However, middle level leaders in this study felt that senior leaders avoided formal appraisal dialogue.

Effective appraisal of middle level leaders requires a balanced approach to the accountability and developmental aspects of appraisal. A focus on providing quality time and maintaining strong interpersonal relationships is imperative. Time was identified as being both the most significant challenge and the most unanimous
request of middle level leaders. In this study, quality time has not been adequately provided according to over half of the middle level leaders.

Furthermore, middle level leaders in this study suggested that strengthening the partnership between senior and middle level leaders within the line management structure could help develop and empower them and the potential leaders. Cardno (2012) reinforces the idea of coaching and mentoring which “relies on experienced managers being able and willing to assist new managers to reflect on their practice and learn” (p. 108). When coaching and mentoring is formalised and ongoing between senior and middle level leaders, the opportunity for learning is enhanced.

Until significance is given to ensuring the appraisal of middle level leaders is effective; accountability, development and improvement may only be addressed at a superficial level.

Making Appraisal Meaningful: Changing Values and Practice

In order to make the appraisal of middle level leaders meaningful, this research concludes that changing values and practice are required. Immediate changes could be effected by the principal to appraisal in practice. This may be addressed by resolving the current challenges of lack of time and training to conduct staff appraisals and addressing the perceived lack of formal professional conversations with senior leaders. Several middle level leaders in this study underlined the two most significant challenges that hinder their ability to effectively undertake their role as being: a lack of time and a lack of training to conduct staff appraisal.

Quality time is crucial, yet schools are restricted by the amount of time they can allocate. Formalising quality time to allow middle level leaders to conduct effective staff appraisals requires commitment from principals. Therefore, principals are urged to prioritise and outline key tasks for middle level leaders and to ensure that their personal appraisal objectives reflect the agreed priorities.
It can be concluded that investing in leadership development and appraisal training for middle level leaders could be made a priority. Cardno (2012) believes that middle level leaders are “significant players in the business of creating and maintaining effective organisations” (p. 107), yet in this study, middle level leaders considered that they are least likely to receive leadership development. Cardno (2012) asserts the need to provide ongoing training and support in areas such as productive dialogue. Productive dialogue empowers people to converse openly and build trusting, transparent relationships. Building trust may be achieved by “showing interest in the careers and aspirations of those they lead, encouraging them to take on new roles and providing professional development opportunities” (Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 13). Whilst middle level leaders indicated they build trust through professional conversations they have with their own staff, they perceived that this is lacking in their personal appraisal. Therefore a series of recommendations are offered.

**Recommendations**

Three areas of change are recommended for the principal, in terms of the personnel policy, appraisal process and appraisal in practice.

**Personnel Policy**

This research recommends that the role of middle level leaders could be specifically targeted within personnel policy. Principals could raise the profile of middle level leaders within the school by recognising the pivotal pedagogical position of middle level leaders within school personnel policy to ensure that they are not only accountable to senior leaders, their teaching staff, students and community but they are developed accordingly. It is recommended that provision for formalised relevant leadership development and appraisal training could be included within school personnel policy.

Although the majority of middle level leaders felt that the purposes of appraisal are articulated by the school, this was more in terms of the process involved. Therefore,
it is recommended that the multiple purposes of appraisal are acknowledged within school policy and subsequently clearly articulated school wide to ensure middle level leaders, and all staff, gain ownership and value its importance.

**Appraisal Process**

Current perceptions of appraisal allude to the onerous paperwork and time required during the appraisal process. It is recommended that that the appraisal process of middle level leaders could be reviewed by the principal and the relevant stakeholders, namely senior and middle level leaders. This study showed that the current compliance focus does not benefit nor enhance middle level leaders’ performance or student improvement. Therefore, the principal and relevant stakeholders could review the school personnel policy and appraisal process to ensure middle level leaders are recognised and appraised effectively. Both accountability and development need to be addressed to ensure a more balanced, integrated appraisal system. To ensure middle level leaders’ appraisal is meaningful, and ongoing, it is recommended that the principal supports an appraisal process that specifically targets middle level leaders as outlined:

1. The principal, middle level leader and relevant senior leader could meet to discuss strengths, objectives, goals and development in order to negotiate a job description that clearly outlines and prioritises their role and responsibility expectations. This will alleviate time pressures as the agreed job description will in turn reflect the middle level leader’s strengths (Ministry of Education, 2012) allowing for an individualised role which highlights and prioritises the key tasks (Kemp & Nathan, 1995).

2. A monthly timetabled meeting could be held between the appraiser (senior leader) and appraisee (middle level leader), with a shared agenda and minutes. Agreed actions arise from each meeting under the following headings: accountability which includes student results and staffing issues; development which includes staff, professional and personal leadership; and improvement which include teaching, learning and leading. Performance is
evaluated by both the appraiser and appraisee, based on the negotiated job description and reflective practice (Sinnema & Robinson, 2007).

3. These formal meetings could become the basis of middle level leaders’ appraisal, triangulated with the BOT report and presentation, as well as department evaluations. This replaces the traditional ‘teacher appraisal’, which includes student surveys. Instead, student and staff evaluations of programmes; reflective practice to evaluate student performance within subject areas and building the capacities of staff through delegation and succession planning (Cardno, 2012) could be utilised.

4. During the formal professional conversations, personalised leadership development (Wise & Bennett, 2003) and training could be offered to meet their needs. Opportunities to discuss career progression and aspirations may be discussed in a non threatening, open and honest way. This requires specific training in productive dialogue, which once embedded within a school culture, has the potential to transform an organisation (Middlewood, 1997). Common needs may be addressed in groups.

5. As the assessment of performance against the Professional Standards for unit holders is mandatory, this might be completed during the year as part of the ongoing meeting, rather than a quick tick box exercise at the end of the appraisal cycle.

6. Once teachers move into middle level leadership roles, appropriate ongoing leadership development, coaching and mentoring could be provided. Cardno (2012), advocates the need for dilemma management training that employs productive dialogue as “by engaging in productive dialogue, a leader both models and strengthens the productive relationship” (p. 61). Cardno’s (1998) Triple I approach offers a tool for scaffolding practical productive conversational steps: Inform, which focuses on giving and receiving information that discloses the position or concerns, Illustrate which provides examples of the reasoning and Inquire which asks relevant questions to check
other’s views. Emotions may be surfaced and checked throughout the process. Cardno (2012) articulates that “the more effectively they are applied, the greater the likelihood of success in terms of being productive” (p. 78). Accordingly, Argyris (1991) believes that change must start at the top, in this instance, with senior management. Piggot-Irvine (2003) concurs, urging senior management to model appraisal as being a high priority within their time management. Cardno (2012) observes that “school leaders should invest energy in developing the capacity of others to influence the critically important issues of teacher quality and student achievement” (p. 102). Nusche et al. (2012) reinforce this view, stating that “there is room to improve the links between teacher appraisal and professional development” (p. 67). Therefore, it is recommended that professional conversations between senior and middle level leaders must be formalised and regular, as part of a balanced appraisal approach.

**Appraisal in Practice**

It is recommended that to ensure espoused personnel policies are enacted in practice; senior leaders could be made accountable to the principal for implementing formal ongoing and effective appraisal of middle level leaders. In turn, middle level leaders could be held accountable, as well as be developed by their senior leaders.

Figure 6.1 summarises a recommended balanced approach to the appraisal of middle level leaders. Middle level leaders hold pivotal pedagogical positions within the middle of the educational organisation. Enabling a balanced approach to appraisal’s dual purposes of accountability and development, may allow both organisational and individual needs to be realised. In other words, whilst the mandated compliance and school level accountabilities are fulfilled, so too are middle level leaders’ personal and professional development recognised. This will demonstrate that middle level leaders are valued, developed and supported in their role and will provide a professional approach to their personal appraisal.
Strengths and Limitations of this Study

This study has contributed new insights to the paucity of literature on the appraisal of middle level leaders in New Zealand secondary schools. This was achieved by obtaining rich qualitative interview findings from five middle level leaders and 26 curriculum middle level leaders’ questionnaire responses, alongside a comprehensive analysis of schools’ personnel policies and appraisal processes. Through triangulation, the conclusions and recommendations may be transferred across other secondary schools in New Zealand.

One limitation of this study was the relatively small sample size of 26 questionnaire respondents and 5 interview participants within three secondary schools. Principals were protective of their middle level leaders, in terms of time and ensuring that participation was on a voluntary basis. Likewise, it may be conjectured that because middle level leaders themselves are busy and overworked, they were unable to find the time to be involved in this research.
Despite piloting the questionnaire (Bell, 2007; Bryman, 2008), there may have been some ambiguity in some questions because the research focused on appraisal of middle level leaders as an appraisee, rather than as an appraiser. In the questionnaire, the Likert scale questions allowed respondents to add comments, yet many middle level leaders did not take the opportunity to write, expand, explain or elaborate. However, the strength of interviewing middle level leaders from each school allowed probing and further clarification in order to elicit deep rich findings.

Although this investigation focused on middle level leaders’ appraisal, a small limitation of this study was that the perspectives of senior leaders, who have the task of appraising middle level leaders, were not explored.

**Areas for Further Research**

An area for further research could be to uncover the perception that senior leaders avoid conducting middle level leaders’ appraisal, including the perceived lack of formal professional conversations.

Middle level leaders identified that a key task of their role is staff appraisal. Areas for further research could be to investigate the effect middle level leaders have on appraising secondary school teachers. By examining perspectives of secondary school teachers, middle level leaders who appraise them and principals who they are accountable to, this research could offer insights into the effectiveness of middle level leaders as appraisers.
Appendices

Appendix A: Information Sheet

Title of Thesis: *Performance Appraisal Experiences of Middle Level Leaders in three New Zealand Secondary Schools.*

My name is Joanne Robson and I am currently enrolled in the Master of Educational Leadership and Management in the Department of Education at Unitec Institute of Technology. I am seeking your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree. The purpose of my research study is to investigate the practice of performance appraisal of middle level leaders within three secondary schools in New Zealand Aotearoa.

The aims of my research are:

1. To examine the importance placed on performance appraisal and the purpose of appraisal.

2. To critically investigate the successes and shortcomings of middle level leaders’ experiences of performance appraisal so that features of effective appraisal can be isolated.

3. To identify what could improve the performance appraisal experience of middle level leaders.

I request your participation in the following ways:

- I will be collecting data using an electronic questionnaire which I will email you next week
- I will be collecting data using an interview schedule and would appreciate you considering being interviewed. I will ask you to sign a consent form regarding this event.

Neither you nor your organisation will be identified in the Thesis. I will be recording your contribution and will provide a transcript for you to check before data analysis is undertaken. I do hope that you will agree to take part and that you will find this
participation of interest. If you have any queries about the project, you may contact my supervisor at Unitec Institute of Technology.

My supervisor is Professor Carol Cardno and may be contacted by email or phone. Phone: (09) 815 4321 ext. 7411 Email: ccardno@unitec.ac.nz

Kind Regards
Joanne Robson
jolouiserobson@gmail.com

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2012-1068
This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from 25/7/12 to 25/7/13. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix B: Electronic Questionnaire

Appraisal of Middle Level Leaders in three New Zealand Secondary Schools

My name is Joanne Robson and I am currently enrolled in the Master of Educational Leadership and Management in the Department of Education at Unitec Institute of Technology. I am seeking your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree. The purpose of my research study is to investigate the practice of performance appraisal of middle level leaders' experiences of performance appraisal within three secondary schools in New Zealand. Middle level Leaders include subject leaders, HODs and HOFs.

The aims of my research are:

1. To examine the importance placed on performance appraisal and the purpose of appraisal.
2. To critically investigate the successes and shortcomings of middle level leaders’ experiences of performance appraisal so that features of effective appraisal can be isolated.
3. To identify what could improve the performance appraisal experience for middle level leaders.

Completion of this questionnaire is entirely voluntary and all responses will remain anonymous. Neither you nor your organisation will be identified in the Thesis. I will be recording your contribution and will provide a transcript for you to check before data analysis is undertaken. I do hope that you will agree to take part and that you will find this participation of interest. If you have any queries about the project, you may contact my supervisor at Unitec Institute of Technology. My supervisor is Professor Carol Cardno and may be contacted by email or phone. Phone: (09) 815 4321 ext. 7411 Email: ccardno@unitec.ac.nz

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2012-1068
This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from 25/7/12 to 25/7/13 If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome. Thanking you in advance for participating. This should take no more than 15 minutes of your time. My liaison person is XXXX. If you wish to contact me directly, my email is jolouiserobson@gmail.com
Part One: Demographic Information

Please identify your gender *

- Female
- Male

I have been teaching for *

- Less than 2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6 - 9 years
- 10+ years

I have been a middle level leader for *

- 1-3 years
- 4-7 years
- 8-12 years
- 13+ years

My department contains *

- 1-3 people
- 4 - 6 people
- 7- 9 people
- 10+ people

This year I am appraising *

1. 1 person
2. 2-3 people
3. 4-6 people
4. □ 7-9 people
5. □ 10+ people

This year I am being appraised by *

- □ Principal
- □ Deputy or Associate Principal
- □ Middle level Leader
- □ Other: 

Part Two: Performance Appraisal Background

You will be asked to rate your perception of the importance of each statement, alongside how you perceive your school to be performing in each area. There is a 6 point scale with 1 = Strongly Disagree through to 6 = Strongly Agree.

1. My job description reflects the current leadership role I undertake

* This is important to me

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

2. My school is performing well in this area

* This is important to me

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

Comment:

2. The purpose/s of performance appraisal are clearly publicised

* This is important to me
**3. I am given adequate time to conduct performance appraisals**

* This is important to me

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

* My school is performing well in this area

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

Comment:

3. I am given adequate time to conduct performance appraisals

* This is important to me

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

* My school is performing well in this area

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

Comment:
5. Performance appraisal is a key focus of the school.  
* This is important to me

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strongly Disagree  ■  ■  ■  ■  ■  ■  ■  ■  Strongly Agree

* My school is performing well in this area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strongly Disagree  ■  ■  ■  ■  ■  ■  ■  ■  Strongly Agree

Comment:

6. Our performance appraisal system is rigorous.  
* This is important to me

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strongly Disagree  ■  ■  ■  ■  ■  ■  ■  ■  Strongly Agree

* My school is performing well in this area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strongly Disagree  ■  ■  ■  ■  ■  ■  ■  ■  Strongly Agree

Comment:
7. Performance appraisal positively impacts on teaching, learning and leading.

* This is important to me

1 2 3 4 5 6

| Strongly Disagree |  |  |  |  |  | Strongly Agree |

* My school is performing well in this area

1 2 3 4 5 6

| Strongly Disagree |  |  |  |  |  | Strongly Agree |

Comment:

Part Three: Performance Appraisal Practice

1. The purpose/s of performance appraisal at my school are:

* Please check all relevant boxes

- [ ] Accountability
- [ ] Compliance
- [ ] Attestation
- [ ] To inform professional development needs
- [ ] Self improvement
- [ ] Improve student teaching and learning
1. A tick box exercise
2. An ongoing reflective process
3. Evaluative
4. Other: 

2. During the Performance Appraisal cycle, I am assessed against:
* Please check all relevant activities

- Professional Standards
- Professional Standards (Unit Holders)
- Registered Teacher Criteria (RTCs)
- Other: 

3. During the Performance Appraisal cycle, I undertake:
* Please check ALL relevant activities

- Student surveys
- Regular meetings with my appraiser
- 'My Portfolio' for tracking
- Open, productive dialogue
- Self assessment
- Observation
- Visiting other schools
- Professional Development
- Leadership Development
- Setting deep objectives
- Other: 

4. During the Performance Appraisal cycle, I am provided with:
* Please check ALL relevant activities

- Training on productive dialogue etc.
- Adequate time to conduct appraisals, observations etc.
- Relevant resources
- ☐ Regular meeting times with my appraiser
- ☐ The strategic plan
- ☐ The school vision
- ☐ Timeframes for completion
- ☐ Other: 

5. Please identify any relevant statement/s that reflect your role as a Middle Level Leader: * Please check ALL relevant activities

- ☐ Rewarding
- ☐ The conduit between senior management and my staff
- ☐ A multifaceted role
- ☐ Influential
- ☐ Trained in leadership development
- ☐ Supported by senior management
- ☐ Overworked
- ☐ Reasonable non contact time
- ☐ Rewarded financially
- ☐ Other: 

6. My performance appraisal experiences are: * Please check ALL relevant activities

- ☐ Meaningful
- ☐ Celebratory
- ☐ Reflective
- ☐ Evaluative
- ☐ Developing me professionally
- ☐ Developing me personally
- ☐ Improving my teaching, learning and leading
- ☐ Confidential
- ☐ Productive
- ☐ Mutually enhancing
Part Four: Performance Appraisal Experiences

Please list any successes you have experienced during your performance appraisal:

Please list any shortcomings you have experienced during your performance appraisal:

Please list suggestions to improve the performance appraisal experience:

Thank you for your time.

I invite you to consider being INTERVIEWED to further discuss your performance appraisal experiences. This will take approximately 30 minutes of your time. Your answers remain confidential and your anonymity will be maintained.

I am willing to be interviewed by Joanne Robson. My NAME and CONTACT NUMBER:
Appendix C: Consent Form

Research Event: Interview
Researcher: Joanne Robson
Programme: Master of Educational Leadership and Management
THESIS TITLE: Performance Appraisal Experiences of Middle Level Leaders in three New Zealand Aotearoa Secondary Schools.

The purpose of my research study is to investigate the practice of performance appraisal of middle level leaders within three secondary schools in New Zealand Aotearoa.

The aims of my research are:

1. To examine the importance placed on performance appraisal and the purpose of appraisal.
2. To critically investigate the successes and shortcomings of middle level leaders’ experiences of performance appraisal so that features of effective appraisal can be isolated.
3. To identify what could improve the performance appraisal experience of middle level leaders.

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research and I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that neither my name nor the name of my organisation will be used in any public reports. I also understand that I will be provided with a transcript for checking before data analysis commences.

I agree to take part in this project.

Signed: ___________________ Name: ___________________________ Date: __________

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2012-1068

This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from 25/7/12 to 25/7/13. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix D: Interview Schedule

Researcher: Joanne Robson  School A B C - Respondent: 1 2 3 4 5 6
Programme: Master of Educational Leadership and Management

THESIS TITLE: Performance Appraisal Experiences of Middle Level Leaders in three New Zealand Secondary Schools.

Opening: (Icebreakers)

1. What are your main functions as a middle level leader?

Introductory Questions:

2. What are the purposes of performance appraisal for middle level leaders at your school?

Transition Questions:

3. Please describe the current performance appraisal practices of middle level leaders at your school.

4. How has your performance appraisal informed your teaching, leading and learning?

5. How has your performance appraisal informed your professional development needs?

b) What type of PD has been identified? Attended?
Key Questions:

6. What importance is placed on performance appraisal of middle level leaders in your school?

7. What are the immediate and long term benefits of performance appraisal of middle level leaders?

8. Describe successful performance appraisal experiences you have had as a middle level leader.

9. Describe negative performance appraisal experiences you have had as a middle level leader.

10. What are the challenges of conducting effective middle level leaders’ performance appraisal?

Conclusion:

11. What suggestions would you offer to improve performance appraisal experiences for middle level leaders

12. Are there any matters regarding performance appraisal that we have not covered that you wish to discuss?
References


