DEVELOPING MIDDLE LEVEL LEADERS
IN
NEW ZEALAND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

By

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Abstract

The role of middle level leaders in New Zealand secondary schools is complex and demanding. With the introduction of self managed schools the role of educational leaders expanded. Responsibilities which were previously the domain of senior leaders have been delegated to middle level leaders. Although the role of middle level leaders has become more intensive, it is conjectured they may not receive adequate leadership development.

This research set out to examine middle level leadership development practices in five New Zealand secondary schools. Using a qualitative approach, eight Board of Trustee members, 15 senior leaders, and 37 middle level leaders were surveyed using an electronic questionnaire. The four key research questions guiding this study were: Why is middle level leadership development important in New Zealand secondary schools? What are the challenges for middle level leaders in New Zealand secondary schools while performing their role? What leadership development opportunities for middle level leaders are currently available in New Zealand secondary schools? What do school leaders perceive as important provision for middle level leadership development? Findings reveal middle level leaders are expected to perform an extensive range of leadership functions, yet they are not supported by appropriate leadership development enabling them to perform their role. Middle level leaders' increased workload is exacerbated by a lack of allocated time to undertake their role.

This study highlights the need for a partnership between the Ministry of Education, school leaders, tertiary institutions and middle level leaders to develop a comprehensive middle leadership development programme which is contextual, practical, supportive and underpinned by theoretical knowledge.

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List of Abbreviations

NAGs National Administration Guidelines

NAPP National Aspiring Principals Programme

NCEA National Certificate of Educational Achievement

NZQA New Zealand Qualifications Authority

PD Professional Development

UREC Unitec Research Ethics Committee

SMT Senior Management Team

Chapter One

Introduction

Introduction

The role of middle level leaders in New Zealand secondary schools is wide and varied. They are responsible for leading teaching and learning; liaising with senior leaders, parents and Boards of Trustees; developing collegial relationships and managing faculties or departments (Ministry of Education, 2012a). Within the school hierarchy middle level leaders are positioned beneath senior leaders such as principals, deputy principals and associate principals but have responsibility for leading teachers (Fitzgerald, 2009). In some contexts, deputy principals are defined as middle level leaders (Cranston, 2009). However, in New Zealand the term middle manager or middle leader generally refers to: faculty leaders, subject heads, heads of departments, pastoral leaders and those with a specific whole school responsibility (Ministry of Education, 2012a). Despite the importance placed on middle level leadership (Busher & Harris, 1999), many middle level leaders perceive they do not have adequate leadership skills to enable them to carry out their role effectively (Dinham, 2007; Fitzgerald, 2009).

This research stems from my own experiences as a middle level leader. Over the last decade, I have been a middle leader in three very different New Zealand secondary schools: a decile five single sex school, a decile one, predominantly Maori, coeducational school, and a decile five coeducational school. Whilst each of these schools made professional development available in the form of school wide or curriculum initiatives, not one provided specific leadership development aimed at improving the practice of middle level leaders. Although I did receive advice from more experienced colleagues, it was of an informal, ad hoc nature and often contrary to current educational leadership and management theory. I hold the assumption that these experiences are not unusual and middle leaders in other secondary schools share similar experiences. Cardno (2012) identifies management

development as one of the least acknowledged forms of professional development in schools despite its significant contribution to school improvement. Fitzgerald (2000) asserts that the complex nature of middle leadership requires specialised skills and knowledge. In the context of the secondary schools in which I have worked, these specialised skills and knowledge were not provided.   Thus, middle leaders developed, if at all, by trial and error and largely through their own efforts.

The New Zealand Context

In the late 1980s, New Zealand followed other western democracies by restructuring its education system (Brundrett, Fitzgerald, & Sommefeldt, 2006; Codd, 2005), devolving significant responsibility and accountability to schools (Cardno, 2005; Fitzgerald, 2000). Responsibility for the governance of schools was given to Boards of Trustees (Kilmister, 1993; Timperley & Robinson, 2002). These reforms placed greater emphasis on efficiency and accountability, thereby expanding the role of educational leaders (Cardno, 2005). In the United Kingdom, education underwent similar neoliberalist reforms which Brown, Rutherford, and Boyle (2000) assert "changed the way in which school leaders and managers work, think, and lead" (p. 238). The principal became "individually responsible for the quality of teaching and learning and as the chief executive officer was directly accountable for the management of the school" (Brundrett et al., 2006, p. 90). As a result, significant responsibilities and leadership tasks were distributed or delegated to those at other levels of the school hierarchy such as middle level leaders (Adey, 2000; Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2006; Youngs, 2009). Brown et al. (2000) state middle level leaders were "asked to take on many additional responsibilities that were in the past widely accepted as being within the domain of members of the senior management team" (p. 249). Adey (2000) contends these changes increased the scope and workload of middle level leaders. In addition to accepting increased responsibilities, middle level leaders were required to adopt a new perception of middle level leadership itself. The expectations placed on middle level leaders have created a plethora of challenges, necessitating the need for specific professional development to enable them to carry out their roles as leaders.

Arguably, leadership development of middle level leaders has become more of a priority considering the expectations placed on middle level leaders following educational reform. Increased pressures make it necessary for middle level leaders to gain new knowledge and skills to effectively undertake their responsibilities (Adey, 2000). As many middle level leaders perceive themselves as ill equipped and under prepared, leadership development to equip them for their role is imperative (Dinham, 2007). Furthermore, providing middle level leaders with role specific professional development prepares a valuable source of leadership potential for the future (Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009). Brown, Boyle, and Boyle (2002) conclude professional development of middle level leaders which enables them to undertake their role within the school hierarchy is a priority.

Rationale

Middle level leadership in New Zealand secondary schools changed markedly with the advent of educational reform in the 1980s (Fitzgerald, 2009). These reforms increased pressure on educational leaders, resulting in the delegation of responsibilities to other levels of the school hierarchy with a considerable intensification of management work for middle level leaders such as heads of departments and teachers in charge of subjects (Cardno, 2005). As a result, middle level leadership evolved from a subject specialist focus (Bennett, Woods, Wise, & Newton, 2007) to a role involving monitoring and evaluation; contribution to and translation of wider school policy aims; evaluation of teaching programmes; development of organisational relationships; quality assurance, liaison with senior management and implementation of change (Fitzgerald, 2000; Glover, Miller, Gambling, Gough, & Johnson, 1999). Middle level leaders have become caught in a dichotomous role in which they are simultaneously teacher and leader (Busher, 2005; Cardno, 1995; Fitzgerald, 2009). Consequently, the scope and volume of tasks middle level leaders are now expected to carry out has led to an increasingly challenging role for these practitioners (Busher & Harris, 1999; Fitzgerald, 2009).

Dinham (2007) states the workload of middle level leaders has become more complex, intensive and challenging. Middle level leaders are often the fulcrum for competing tensions (Bennett et al., 2007), trying to balance departmental concerns with the wider needs of the school. Middle level leaders are expected to build collegial departmental relationships yet have responsibility for monitoring and evaluating colleagues' performance (Bennett et al., 2007; Fitzgerald, Youngs, & Grootenboer, 2003). Research suggests many middle level leaders do not have the skills to deal with these challenges (Dinham, 2007).

Despite the increased complexity of the middle level leadership role following educational reform, there has been a lack of leadership development for middle level leaders at national level (Chetty, 2007). In New Zealand national leadership development programmes have been aimed primarily at principals and those aspiring to be principals (Brundrett et al., 2006; Bush, 2010). The Ministry of Education's document of middle level leadership 'Leading from the Middle' goes someway to addressing this situation (Ministry of Education, 2012a). Research from the United Kingdom reports middle level leaders participating in a national leadership development programme were more confident undertaking their middle level leadership roles and as a result contributed to improved teaching and learning (Brundrett, 2006). Similarities between England and New Zealand (Brundrett et al., 2006), would suggest comparable middle level leadership development may have similar benefits for middle level leaders in New Zealand secondary schools. Providing leadership development to improve the capacity of middle level leaders is imperative considering the complexities of the middle level leaders' role and the challenges they face (Brown et al., 2002; Dinham, 2007).

Research Aims and Questions

Research Aims

The aim of this research was to examine middle level leadership development practices in New Zealand secondary schools to gain an understanding of current

middle level leadership development practices. This research examines the importance of leadership development for middle level leaders in New Zealand secondary schools; the challenges for middle level leaders in New Zealand secondary schools while performing their role and the perspectives of school leaders regarding the leadership development opportunities for middle level leaders currently available in New Zealand secondary schools. Finally, this research identifies what school leaders perceive as important provision for middle level leadership development.

Research Questions

This research revolves around four research questions:

1. Why is middle level leadership development important in New Zealand secondary schools?

2. What are the challenges for middle level leaders in New Zealand secondary schools while performing their role?

3. What leadership development opportunities for middle level leaders are currently available in New Zealand secondary schools?

4. What do school leaders perceive as important provision for middle level leadership development?

Thesis Outline

Chapter One

This chapter introduces the research topic, development of middle level leaders in New Zealand secondary schools. A rationale is provided for this research study and the research aims and questions are outlined.

Chapter Two

This chapter provides a critical review of the literature. The expectations and challenges of middle level leaders' role are examined. An understanding of leadership development and its provision are also investigated.

Chapter Three

Chapter Three provides an overview of research methodology and a rationale for the adoption of an interpretive approach to this study. Participant selection is outlined along with a discussion of the method of data collection. Data analysis, validity and reliability are discussed and ethical issues considered.

Chapter Four

Findings from this research study are presented in this chapter. Data is presented from the perspectives of members of Boards of Trustees, senior leaders and middle level leaders, under the headings: the importance of leadership development; multiple perspectives of leadership development; the expectations of leadership development; the challenges of leadership development; and provision of leadership development for middle level leaders.

Chapter Five

This chapter analyses the findings from chapter four in the context of the literature from Chapter Two. The findings discussed in this chapter are presented under the headings: expectations of middle level leaders and challenges of middle level leaders.

Chapter Six

This chapter presents conclusions of the findings discussed in Chapter Five and offers recommendations. Strengths and limitations of this study are discussed and areas of further research are provided.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter the literature relating to the leadership development of middle level leaders is critically reviewed and examined. This examination of the literature is presented under the headings: the expectations of middle level leaders; the challenges of middle level leaders; understanding leadership development; and provision of leadership development.

Expectations of Middle Level Leaders

Leadership and Management

The term middle leader is used variously to denote heads of departments, subject leaders, heads of learning areas, teachers in charge, pastoral leaders, and faculty heads (Bennett et al., 2007; Busher, 2005; Glover et al., 1999). However, in some contexts the term 'middle manager' is also used (Bush, 2008; Busher & Harris, 1999; Cardno, 2005; Cardno & Fitzgerald, 2005; Fitzgerald, 2000). This overlapping of terms may be more than just semantics. Glover et al. (1999) suggest the use of the terms 'middle manager' or 'middle leader' may emphasise the school's perception of the role. Schools who use 'middle manager' may stress the operational aspect of the role, whereas schools that use 'middle leader' may focus on the strategic, developmental aspect. Cardno and Fitzgerald (2005) interpret management as an umbrella term which incorporates leadership, arguing "leadership is often elevated and management denigrated to a level of mere managerialism" (p. 317). Although debate continues as to whether leadership and management can be differentiated, Spillane and Diamond (2007) suggest they are virtually indistinguishable and any distinction is theoretical. Leadership and management serve different functions at

different times, however, they are two sides of the same coin and cannot be separated. In the context of this research study the term middle level leader was used to denote both leadership and management functions of middle level leaders of curriculum or subject areas (Feist, 2008; Ministry of Education, 2012a).

The role of the middle level leader is a pivotal one, involving working with and through others (Bennett et al., 2007; Brundrett, 2006; Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2006). Middle level leaders mediate their school's values to colleagues, students and wider stakeholders, while also reporting their colleagues', students' and wider stakeholders' values to senior management (Busher, 2005). Moreover, middle level leaders translate the policies of senior management into practice and act as a liaison between management and staff, a function described as 'bridging and brokering' (Busher & Harris, 1999). In this context, middle level leaders are conduits of all that pass between senior management and teaching staff (Brown et al., 2000; Cardno, 1995; Fitzgerald, 2009). Fitzgerald (2000) describes middle level leadership as having a dual role, comprising of administration and responsibility for teaching. While this is the case, Busher (2005) found middle level leaders preferred to identify themselves as teachers rather than locate themselves in the echelon of management. The tension of being both a manager and a teacher highlights the dichotomy of roles in which middle level leaders find themselves.

Middle Level Leadership Functions

In practice, middle level leaders draw on elements from across the entire management–leadership spectrum (Bush, 2008; Cardno & Fitzgerald, 2005). A synthesis of the literature identifies leadership functions most frequently undertaken by middle level leaders (Adey, 2000; Brown et al., 2002; Bush, 2008; Busher, 2005; Dinham, 2007; Glover et al., 1999; Poultney, 2007). Leadership functions including: instructional leadership; budgeting; interpersonal interactions; administration; strategic planning; monitoring and evaluation of staff performance; developing staff and developing a department vision, underpin the role of middle level leadership. These functions demonstrate the way in which middle level leaders are now expected to exert influence horizontally as well as vertically (Dinham, 2007; Ministry

of Education, 2012a). In particular, three functions emerge as integral to middle level leaders: the use of instructional leadership as a means of influencing teaching and learning (Poultney, 2007); the degree to which the majority of leaders' tasks are interrelational (Bennett et al., 2007; Glover et al., 1999; Poultney, 2007) and the importance of administrative tasks in underpinning educational aims (Bush, 2008). Whilst this list of leadership functions is not exhaustive, it illustrates the complexities and demands placed on middle level leaders.

Instructional Leadership

A key function of middle level leadership is the improvement of teacher practice and student achievement (Cardno, 1995; Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2006). Leadership that focuses on a school's core activity of teaching and learning is referred to in the literature by a variety of terms such as academic leadership, professional leadership, curriculum leadership, pedagogical leadership, learning centred leadership and instructional leadership (Bush, 2008; Hallinger, 2003; Poultney, 2007; Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009). Bush (2008) asserts the purpose of instructional leadership is to influence "the motivation, commitment and capability of teachers" (p. 39). Traditionally, principals were the instructional leaders of schools, however, increased role demands have made this more difficult and in secondary schools, instructional leadership is often distributed middle level leaders (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Southworth, 2004). Due to their influential position with teachers, many view middle leaders as ideally located within the school hierarchy to take on the instructional leader role (Brundrett, 2006; Bush, 2008; Cardno, 2005; Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2006; Robinson et al., 2008). Arguably, when middle level leaders effectively undertake the fundamental role of leading learning, student achievement improves (Brown & Rutherford, 1999; Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2006). However, Southworth (2004) states "leadership which influences teachers and has positive effects on their classroom behaviours requires high levels of professional skill and knowledge about pedagogy, pupil learning, adult learning and human interaction" (p. 107). Therefore, middle leaders require specific leadership development to equip them with the skills required to influence teachers and therefore student achievement.

Interpersonal Relationships

Middle level leaders rely heavily on their staff to achieve educational aims (Dinham, 2007; Glover et al., 1999; Poultney, 2007). Feist's (2008) research shows middle level leaders consider the relational aspect of their role a high priority. Busher (2005) contends that understanding people is essential to being able to work with them. However, many middle level leaders find dealing with people difficult and disconcerting (Cardno, 2012). It may be viewed as alarming, therefore, that many middle level leaders do not feel adequately prepared to carry out the interpersonal aspect of the role (Dinham, 2007). Considering middle level leaders' reliance on others to achieve educational goals, developing them with the skills required to build relationships through which they may influence others is imperative.

Administration

Administration is critical to providing the context in which teaching and learning may take place (Bush, 2008; Poultney, 2007). Middle level leaders are expected to carry out a considerable array of administrative tasks from conducting department meetings to developing centralised management systems (Busher, 2005; Dinham, 2007). The Ministry of Education (2012a) contend that middle level leaders' responsibilities may include managing systems and administrative practices that support an ordered and safe school environment. Kemp and Nathan (1995) identify three categories of administrative tasks: day to day tasks which ensure the ordered running of a department; administering and organising departmental tasks which contribute to school events or activities and dealing with routine paperwork. Bush (2008) describes administration as a function which supports educational purposes of the school. In comparison, research carried out by Wise and Bennett (2003) reports that middle level leaders may give administrative tasks greater priority because they are more visible to others in the school. However, if one takes the view that effective management or administrative tasks provide the context in which student learning occurs, it seems logical, if not critical, for it to be included in any middle level leader development programme.

Budgeting

The management of budgets, including an understanding of whole school finance, is a function of middle level leadership which is becoming increasingly critical (Adey, 2000; Brown et al., 2002). However, research shows this is an area where middle level leaders feel the least confident (Adey, 2000). Bush (2008) suggests, in the context of decentralised education systems where leaders are expected to provide financial reports to governing bodies, the function of budgeting and finance is particularly important.

Strategic Planning

Whilst strategic planning is generally a function of senior school leaders and Boards of Trustees, many middle level leaders are required to develop departmental plans within the context of wider school planning priorities (Adey, 2000; Brown et al., 2002). Research shows senior leaders would like to see middle level leaders making a greater contribution to the strategic direction of the school (Glover et al., 1999). Brown et al. (2002) identify leadership development which raises middle level leaders' awareness of their role within a wider school context, as a professional development priority.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Since educational reforms, monitoring and evaluation of staff performance have become a much greater component of middle level leadership (Bennett et al., 2007). However, this is an area which middle level leaders find difficult and distressing (Adey, 2000), often viewing it as contrary to building collegial relationships (Glover et al., 1999). Receiving training to effectively monitor and evaluate staff performance is perceived to be a high priority for middle level leaders (Adey, 2000; Brown et al., 2002).

Developing Staff

Middle level leaders are charged with responsibility for facilitating department based professional development and encouraging staff to engage in school wide professional development initiatives (Dinham, 2007; Ministry of Education, 2012a). Kemp and Nathan (1995) describe the development of staff as a key function of middle level leaders, they contend that staff development at department level is critical to the effectiveness of the whole school. There is some evidence to suggest that developing staff within departments is a function with which middle level leaders have only limited autonomy, thereby restricting the staff development they are able to conduct (Adey, 2000). However, within a departmental context opportunities exist for staff development to occur informally through the daily interactions of middle level leaders and their staff (Blanford, 2006). It is important that middle level leaders are utilised to develop the capacity of their staff and improve teaching and learning (Cardno, 2012).

Vision

Busher (2005) identifies developing a departmental vision as one of the most significant functions of middle level leadership. Similarly, Dinham (2007) highlights the importance departmental vision plays in the development of a successful department.

The role of middle level leaders has evolved from an advocate of departmental interests (Bennett et al., 2007) to acting in a variety of new arenas such as: organisational policy development (Busher, 2005); monitoring colleagues' performance and demonstrating accountability (Glover et al., 1999). Bennett et al. (2007) assert that changes to middle leaders' role have created uncertainty and presented challenges which take them beyond their existing knowledge base.

Challenges for Middle Level Leaders

Although the role of middle level leaders has become more complex, leadership development for a significant number of middle level leaders has remained stagnant (Fitzgerald, 2000). Research found middle level leaders were under prepared for key aspects of the role, with only half reporting their learning needs were being met (Adey, 2000; Dinham, 2007). It is often assumed middle level leaders are appointed because they possess the requisite skills, however, this is not always the case (Brown et al., 2002). Fitzgerald (2009) highlights many middle level leaders feel uncertainty when moving into middle level leadership roles. Glover et al. (1999) state "Unless subject leaders are given training opportunities to enhance the basic skills which can help them to manage, involve, support, reward and lead others, any success they may have is likely to be intuitive" (p. 334). Effective leadership requires specific professional development focusing on a specialised body of skills and knowledge (Cardno, 2005); a lack of leadership development can exacerbate an already challenging role (Adey, 2000; Brown et al., 2000; Dinham, 2007). Middle level leaders require development and support to help them meet the challenges they encounter in their role as leaders (Adey, 2000). From the literature, four main challenges confronting middle level leaders emerge: developing interpersonal relationships; tensions between collegiality and accountability; conflict between school wide and departmental loyalty and a lack of allocated time.

Developing Interpersonal Relationships

Busher (2005) contends that negotiating and relating with colleagues is at the core of middle level leadership. Despite this, many middle level leaders perceive they lack the interpersonal skills required for the role (Dinham, 2007) and find working through others in a mediated approach challenging (Busher, 2005). Cardno (2012) asserts one of the most significant tasks a school leader can perform is to solve problems involving people. People are diverse and have a variety of world views that are often so deeply ingrained they are held as beliefs without reason (Argyris, 1977). Senge et al. (2000) concur, stating "mental models are usually tacit, existing below the level of awareness, they are often untested and unexamined" (p. 67). The challenge for

middle level leaders is to bring together diverse, often conflicting views to achieve educational aims. To compound the problem most people, when faced with a potentially embarrassing or threatening situation, become defensive in order to protect themselves (Argyris, 1994). "Defensiveness prevents people from learning about and getting rid of the causes of threat and embarrassment because we make sure these are never discussed" (Piggot-Irvine & Cardno, 2005, p. 56). Moving beyond defensive behaviour requires 'double loop learning' which involves an incredibly complex set of interrelational skills (Argyris, 1976). For middle level leaders relying on others to act on their behalf, interrelational skills are of the upmost importance if they are to influence others to achieve educational goals (Bush, 2008; Busher, 2005; Dinham, 2007; Glover et al., 1999; Poultney, 2007).

Tensions between Collegiality and Accountability

A further challenge for middle level leaders is carrying out functions which seemingly undermine collegial relationships (Bennett et al., 2007). Middle level leaders are expected to build relationships, motivate staff, and support their department, whilst acting as line managers to monitor colleagues' performance (Fitzgerald et al., 2003). Brown and Rutherford (1999) state middle level leaders view themselves as "managers of the curriculum and not as managers of their colleagues" (p. 238). To avoid the responsibility of monitoring and evaluation, which may be viewed as contentious, middle level leaders may retreat into 'busy' administrative tasks (Glover et al., 1999). It is argued professional accountability "can be dealt with as a collegial responsibility, in which it is seen as part of a collaborative learning exercise aimed at improving practice for the team as a whole" (Bennett et al., 2007, p. 459). However, Busher (2005) questions whether collegiality can be achieved in a hierarchical organisation. Adey (2000) argues if middle level leaders are charged with evaluating staff but are not given responsibility for developing them, collegial relationships may be damaged.

Conflict between School Wide and Departmental Loyalty

The majority of middle level leaders' interrelational interactions occur in departments (Brown et al., 2000; Brundrett, 2006). Secondary schools are structured almost overwhelmingly around subject departments or curriculum areas (Brown & Rutherford, 1999; Feist, 2008; Fitzgerald, 2000), which "provide the structures and channels for managing the teaching and learning of students and staff" (Busher & Harris, 1999, p. 313). Brown et al. (2000) claim departments are the most appropriate and important units of change due to their size and location within the school hierarchy (Busher & Harris, 1999). However, developing a strong departmental culture that contributes to wider school aims can be challenging for middle level leaders (Busher & Harris, 1999; Fitzgerald, 2009). Fitzgerald (2009) asserts tension may be created as a consequence of middle level leaders having responsibility for a subject area whilst also being positioned within the school's management hierarchy due to the administrative aspect of their role. Feist (2008) concurs highlighting middle level leaders may be torn between the demands of their leadership role within the wider school context and their role as a subject leader. If the department culture is at odds with school policy it can fragment the wider school culture and impede school improvement. Interestingly, Bennett et al. (2007) found departments that espoused a strong collegial culture were often the most resistant to change. Powerful departmental cultures can lead to homogeneity of thought (Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Senge et al., 2000). "The longer teams work together, the better individuals come to know one another" (Preskill & Torres, 1999, p. 31). This may result in resistance to change that participants perceive as threatening their culture. In this situation middle level leaders may feel torn between loyalty to their department and the needs of the wider school (Bennett et al., 2007).

Lack of Time

Adey (2000) and Wise and Bennett (2003) contend middle level leaders are overloaded with expectations in excess of the time allocated to them. Fitzgerald (2009) agrees, asserting that middle level leaders are overburdened with compliance tasks to such an extent, it dominates their time. Although middle level leaders in

New Zealand secondary schools are allocated additional time to carry out leadership functions, many claim it is not sufficient to perform their role effectively. Research in Australia and the United Kingdom on the role of middle level leadership also highlights a lack of time to undertake the role effectively as a major challenge (Brown et al., 2000; Dinham, 2007). As a result, functions such as monitoring and evaluation of staff; classroom planning; assessment and reporting are either neglected, completed during class time or completed at home after school (Brown et al., 2000; Busher, 2005; Fitzgerald, 2009).

The challenges associated with middle level leadership make the role a difficult one (Fitzgerald, 2009). It is argued, "The term middle level leader may simply be a means of seducing teachers to take on extra tasks and responsibilities without the commensurate increase in pay or time" (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008, p. 334). Middle level leaders are often untrained and unprepared for the wide range of complex tasks they are expected to carry out (Dinham, 2007). Although it may not be possible to eliminate challenges caused by external compliance tasks, middle level leaders can be better equipped to deal with them. Offering specific leadership development to middle level leaders to help them overcome these challenges is essential if they are to influence teaching and learning.

Understanding Leadership Development

Professional Development

Professional development is fundamental to the improvement of organisational performance and a core task of leadership and management (Bolam, 2002). Cardno (2005) asserts professional development is of the utmost importance, suggesting "school leaders should invest energy in developing the capacity of others to influence the critically important issues of teacher quality and student achievement" (p. 297). In New Zealand, professional development is mandated in the National Administration Guidelines (NAGs) (Ministry of Education, 1999). Boards of Trustees are responsible for developing staff and incorporating professional development into

their school's policy documents which are enacted by the principal (Kilmister, 1993; Piggot-Irvine & Cardno, 2005).

Leadership Development

Leadership development is a specialised form of professional development through which leaders of all levels may develop competencies and capabilities to perform leadership functions effectively (Cardno, 2012). Van Velsor and McCauley (2004) describe leader development as "the expansion of a person's capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes" (p. 2). Adey (2000) points out the folly of appointing people to middle level leadership roles and then expecting them to learn on the job. Similarly, Bush (2008) asserts that being qualified for the role of a classroom teacher is no longer sufficient for the role of leadership. Rhodes and Brundrett (2009) call for principals to be active in the identification, development and succession of middle level leaders, advocating a more explicit approach to building leadership capabilities at all levels of school hierarchy. Bush (2008) concurs, suggesting effective leadership development enabling progression from classroom to school leadership is a moral obligation of education systems around the world.

Bush (2010) argues that leadership development should be context specific, focusing on process rather than content. This argument finds favour with West-Burnham (2001) who contends, in the context of leadership development, learning should be individual, include participant challenge and be based on intrinsic motivation. Brundrett et al. (2006) question whether generic competency models of leadership development can cater for the complexity of leadership. Wise and Bennett (2003) assert that contextualised professional development may be of more benefit to middle level leaders. Cardno (2012) identifies three main elements of leadership development: leadership training – in which leaders develop practical skills through formal structured means such as in-service courses; leadership education – which applies to leadership and management qualifications gained through institutions; and leadership support - in which experienced leaders are coached or mentored by more experienced leaders.

Van Velsor and McCauley's (2004) model of leadership development is based on 'developmental experiences' comprising of three elements: *Assessment* - the analysis of data to identify gaps between capacity and performance; *Challenge* - the range of experiences leaders engage with that take them out of their comfort zone and force them to question their own practice; and *Support* - the people who provide reassurance, coping strategies, and an attentive ear to leaders undergoing difficult experiences. These three elements provide a suitable framework in which to locate leadership development activities. This framework captures the views of other authors (Bush, 2010; Cardno, 2012; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009; West-Burnham, 2001) which are included in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Activities that Promote Leadership Development

	Assessment	Challenge	Support
Van Velsor & McCauley (2004)	Analyse data to identify gaps between capacity and performance	Undertake experiences that challenge or stretch thereby leading to development of leadership practice	Developmental experiences are most powerful when they include an element of support
Bush (2010)	Reflect on performance	Undertake learning experiences where there is a bridge between the learning situation and the work situation	Effective support is ensured by careful matching and ongoing evaluation of relationships and quality of support
Cardno & Fitzgerald (2005)	Graduate and post graduate leadership development programmes	Reframe perspectives, using higher level thinking and linking theory to practice	Coaching, mentoring and support
Rhodes & Brundrett (2009)	Identification of development needs by SMT	Job rotation and shadowing internship	Peer support, mentoring and coaching

Table 2.1, highlights that the delivery of leadership development, in a range of contexts, may be underpinned by elements of assessment, challenge and support. Using a model such as this allows content to be delivered in a way that is individualised for the learner, yet supportive and directly linked to their practice (Bush, 2008).

Provision for Leadership Development

Leadership development traditionally has taken the form of graduate and post graduate programmes, on-job training and external mentoring or coaching (Bush, 2010; Cardno, 2005; Cardno & Fitzgerald, 2005; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009). It has only been in the last decade that leadership development has become a focus of government policy (Brundrett et al., 2006; Bush, 2008). In the United Kingdom, the National College for School Leadership was established in 2000 to provide educational leadership development programmes for senior and middle level leaders (Brundrett, 2006; Bush, 2008). Likewise, New Zealand's National Aspiring Principals Programme (NAPP) (Ministry of Education, 2012b) was created to mentor potential principals. Furthermore, 'Leading from the Middle' (Ministry of Education, 2012a), a model of middle level leadership introduced in 2012, reflects middle level leadership development programmes from the United Kingdom (Brundrett et al., 2006). The aim of 'Leading from the Middle' (Ministry of Education, 2012a) is to outline middle level leadership functions and attributes required to embed the strategic vision and direction of principals and Boards of Trustees into departments and classrooms. Middle level leaders, the Ministry of Education (2012a) contend, are the connectors between vision and curriculum and therefore integral to the improvement of student achievement. Fitzgerald and Gunter (2008) express concern that such development programmes reinforce normative views of leadership conceptualised by educational reform. They question whether the proliferation of leadership programmes is actually impacting on student achievement. In reality, establishing causal links between leadership learning, leadership practice and learning outcomes is difficult (Brundrett et al., 2006).

Summary

In this chapter the literature concerning the leadership development of middle level leaders was critically reviewed. The literature revealed that the role of middle level leaders is varied, demanding and involves a specific set of complex leadership skills. Middle level leaders require specialised leadership development to equip them with the skills to undertake their role effectively.   The following chapter presents an examination of appropriate research methodology to investigate leadership development of middle level leaders.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of research methodology and provides a rationale for the adoption of an interpretive epistemology for this research study. An outline of participant selection is provided, along with a discussion of the electronic questionnaire used as the method of data collection. Data analysis, validity and reliability are also discussed. Finally, ethical issues are considered.

Research Methodology

Overview

As a discipline, educational research emerged at the end of the 19th century from a purely positivist paradigm (de Landsheere, 1997; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). During the 1960s, however, with the emergence of the humanistic research movement, post positivist or interpretive paradigms were developed and utilised (Bryman, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Keeves, 1997). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe the historical division between positivist and interpretive paradigms in polarised terms with interpretive paradigms regarded as subordinate to a positivist paradigm. However, a more contemporary view tends to locate research along a continuum with interpretive, qualitative research at one end and positivist, quantitative research at the other (Creswell, 2002). Keeves (1997) goes as far as suggesting separation between positivist and interpretive paradigms is theoretical and "does not reflect an inherent epistemological difference" (p. 277).

The choice between a positivist or interpretive paradigm depends largely on ontological and epistemological assumptions (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Davidson & Tolich, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Davidson and Tolich (2003) assert

ontological assumptions are concerned with what does or can exist in the world. In the context of social research, ontological considerations revolve around whether social phenomena are constructions of social actors or constructed externally to social actors (Bryman, 2008; Cohen et al., 2007). Epistemological assumptions are those which seek to ascertain "what counts as legitimate knowledge" (Davidson & Tolich, 2003, p. 25). Decisions made regarding ontology and epistemology impact on research methodology (Cohen et al., 2007). Generally speaking researchers who adopt a positivist stance tend towards quantitative methodology whereas researchers who adopt an interpretive stance tend towards qualitative methodology.

To research middle level leadership development in New Zealand secondary schools, an interpretive epistemological position was adopted. An interpretive epistemology is concerned with understanding the meanings of social phenomenon and interactions with social actors within a specific context through a more subjective, qualitative approach (Cohen et al., 2007; Davidson & Tolich, 2003). Bryman (2008) describes an interpretive epistemological position as "the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants" (p. 366). In other words, rather than simply observing people and the events that occur in their world, an interpretive approach attempts to understand why those events occur. Cohen et al. (2007) suggest due to the "immense complexity of human nature and the elusive and intangible quality of social phenomena" (p. 11), an interpretive approach is likely to be more successful in a school context than a positivist approach. The complexity of educational problems is such that reducing them to just one or two variables in keeping with a positivist approach may be difficult. Therefore, with an emphasis on understanding how participants create and maintain their social environments (Davidson & Tolich, 2003) an interpretive approach was well suited for researching middle leadership development in New Zealand secondary schools.

Stemming from the decision to adopt an interpretive approach was the choice of appropriate methodology. Kaplan (1973) contends methodology is, in a broad sense, a process of inquiry (as cited in Cohen et al., 2007). Whilst both qualitative and quantitative methodologies can be employed with an interpretive approach,

qualitative research implies an emphasis on social relationships and situations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Creswell (2002) concurs asserting qualitative methodology is primarily concerned with socially constructed experiences. Moreover, qualitative research "emphasises words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data" (Bryman, 2008, p. 366). As this study aimed to answer the research questions using an interpretive approach, by seeking the perspectives Board of Trustees', Senior Leaders' and Middle Level Leaders' regarding middle leadership development, a qualitative methodology for this research study was appropriate.

The research questions explored in this study revolved around the constructed realities of members of Boards of Trustees, senior leaders and middle level leaders in their work environments, their interactions with other actors and the work challenges they faced in the presence or absence of leadership development. The complexity of the interactions and perceptions associated with such questions required a methodology which allowed the 'voices' of participants to be expressed (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Likewise, such questions endeavour to move beyond quantitative cause and effect reasoning (Bryman, 2008) to an understanding of the situational constraints shaping participants' perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Research Methods

Selection of Participants

For this research study a purposive sampling approach was adopted. Purposive sampling is widely utilised in qualitative research as it allows researchers to select participants who are "relevant to the research questions being posed" (Bryman, 2008, p. 415). In the context of this research study, Board of Trustee members, senior leaders and middle level leaders all held relevant information in relation to my research questions, making them an appropriate sample group using a purposive sampling approach. For the purpose of this study middle level leaders were defined as subject leaders, Heads of Departments and Heads of Faculties. Although

pastoral leaders are considered to hold a position of middle level leadership within the school hierarchy, this study focused on those in positions of curriculum leadership.

As only one research instrument was used in this study, a sample was required which was large enough to provide valid data. Consequently, it was decided to survey Board of Trustee members, senior leaders and middle level leaders from five New Zealand secondary schools in order to provide a sample group of approximately (n=150). A response rate of 50% was anticipated which would therefore, provide 75 participants. Finding schools that were prepared to participate proved difficult; many of the schools approached declined to take part in this research. The reasons given were: time constraints, increased pressure on staff and not fitting with the school's strategic direction. Interestingly, many of the schools who declined to participate had senior leadership teams without formal leadership and management qualifications.

Fifteen secondary schools were invited to participate in this study. The five secondary schools who agreed to participate in this research were all co-educational state schools in the Auckland area. Each school provided a liaison from whom information of respondents was able to be obtained. All but one liaison provided email addresses for Board of Trustee members, senior leaders and middle level leaders in order that they could be contacted directly. One liaison preferred to act as an intermediary between respondents and the researcher. Interestingly, this school had the least number of respondents. An electronic questionnaire (Appendix One) was sent to 145 respondents across the five secondary schools (n=145), 60 respondents returned the questionnaire. This provided a sample group of eight Board of Trustee members, 15 senior leaders and 37 middle level leaders, an overall response rate of 41%. Although the response rate was less than that anticipated, it provided enough valid data for this research study. Table 3.1 provides a summary of the number of respondents from each of the five schools who participated in this study.

Table 3.1: Number of Respondents from Selected Secondary Schools

	Respondent numbers		
	Board of Trustee Members	Senior Leaders	Middle Level Leaders
School 1	1	1	6
School 2	2	4	8
School 3	1	2	14
School 4	2	4	6
School 5	2	4	9
Total	8	15	43

Questionnaire

To examine the perspectives of members of Boards of Trustees, senior leaders and middle level leaders for this research, an electronic questionnaire was utilised. Bryman (2008) asserts questionnaires are a suitable method for gathering information from a wide range of participants relatively easily. In addition, questionnaires were an effective means by which the relevant groups could be surveyed in order to compare their responses (Hinds, 2000). Bryman (2008) asserts "Self-completion questionnaires are more convenient for respondents, because they can complete a questionnaire when they want and at the speed that they want to go" (p. 218). However, whilst there were a number of advantages in using questionnaires, designing one that elicited suitable data was challenging (Hinds, 2000). The difficulty lay in presenting participants with questions which were at an appropriate level to stimulate informative responses, while at the same time contending with the diversity of the participants (Bryman, 2008; Krueger, 1994).

The questionnaire comprised of four sections. The first three sections contained closed questions designed to gather demographic information and closed response answers. In section one, respondents were asked to identify whether they were a Board of Trustee member, senior leader or middle level leader; how many years' experience they had in their current role; how many years leadership experience they had in an educational context and whether they were male or female. It was

initially thought this information might be relevant to this study; subsequently, only the respondents' position within their school was utilised in the analysis of the data.

In section two, respondents were presented with a list containing eight areas of leadership development: instructional leadership (leading the improvement of teaching and learning); budgeting skills; interpersonal skills; administrative skills; strategic planning; monitoring and evaluation of staff performance; developing staff and developing a vision, which were derived from the literature. Respondents were asked to identify from the list: which areas were currently offered to middle level leaders in their school; in which of the areas they had received leadership development and which areas they perceived would be of benefit to middle level leaders. In addition, respondents were able to indicate if they had received no leadership development and were provided with the opportunity include additional areas of leadership development not provided in the list. These questions were used to gather data on what leadership development was currently offered and what leadership development might be of benefit to middle level leaders.

In section three, respondents were presented with three statements which they were asked to rate on a six point Likert scale in which 1 represented Strongly Disagree and 6 represented Strongly Agree. The three statements were: Leadership development of middle level leaders is considered important in my school, Leadership development should be a priority in my school and Middle level leaders in my school are trained to carry out their role effectively. The purpose of this section was to gain respondents' perspectives of leadership development of middle level leaders. The data gathered from each of these statements was able to be compared in order to identify any conflict of perspectives. Furthermore, the data gathered from this section was able to be compared to data gathered in sections two and four in order to triangulate responses and gain an accurate picture of leadership development of middle level leaders.

In section four, respondents were given the opportunity to answer five open ended questions: What are the main expectations of middle level leaders in your school? What are the challenges experienced by middle level leaders in your school? What is

your understanding of leadership development? How is leadership development for middle level leaders reflected in your school's policy documentation? What leadership development opportunities could better equip middle level leaders in your school to meet the challenges they may face? These questions were designed to gain respondents' perspectives of middle level leaders' role, challenges stemming from that role and their understanding of leadership development of middle level leaders. When constructing the open ended questions it could not be assumed that all participants shared the same levels of literacy; background knowledge or world view (Bell, 2007; Bryman, 2008). As a consequence, questions were worded succinctly, where possible, avoiding 'value' words that could be interpreted by participants in different ways (Krueger, 1994).

The questionnaire was administered using Google Docs, a free web based system which allows users to create and edit documents online. Respondents were emailed a hyperlink which enabled them to complete the questionnaire online. Respondents were only able to complete the questionnaire once which ensured data was not compromised. The questionnaire, along with a reminder, was sent to respondents with whom the researcher had direct contact, a total of three times. This was necessary to gain an acceptable response rate. The researcher obtained permission from each school's liaison before reminder emails were sent. Data was collated by Google Docs and then subsequently transferred to a Microsoft Excel spread sheet to be analysed.

Data Analysis

For data to have meaning it first has to be interpreted. Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland (2006) contend analysis is essentially the "process in which raw data are turned into "findings" or "results" (p. 195). For this research study a thematic approach was used to analyse the qualitative data. Lofland et al. (2006) define coding simply and succinctly as "the process of sorting your data into various categories that organise it and render it meaningful from the vantage point of one or more frameworks or sets of ideas" (p. 200). Initially, open coding was utilised for "breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data"

(Strauss and Corbin (1990), as cited in Bryman, 2008, p. 543). The qualitative data generated from the research was aggregated into one spread sheet and sorted into the categories: Board of Trustee members, senior leaders and middle level leaders. A new spread sheet was created for each category. The data within each category was then organised into broad themes drawn from the literature (Bryman, 2008; Lofland et al., 2006). The themes from the literature were expectations, challenges, further development of middle level leaders, understanding of leadership development, and leadership development of middle level leaders within policy documentation.   Once the data had been sorted into broad themes from the literature, a more selective coding process was applied in which more specific themes, what Bryman (2008) terms 'phenomenon of interest', were identified. The data generated from the closed questions were sorted and analysed using the Microsoft Excel spread sheet. Closed questions that were of a demographic nature did not require coding.

Validity and Reliability

Validity is the "the extent to which an instrument measures what it claims to measure, or tests what it is intended to test" (Hinds, 2000, p. 42). Guba and Lincoln (2005) suggest a measure of validity is to ask the question "Are these findings sufficiently authentic…that I may trust myself in acting on their implications?" (p. 205). In other words, validity refers to the honesty, accuracy and integrity with which research is carried out. Cohen et al. (2007) suggest validity can be demonstrated through the triangulation of data. In this study, the multiple perspectives gathered from the questionnaire allowed for the triangulation of data. Moreover, the variety of question types within the questionnaire enabled responses to be compared thereby offering another form of triangulation. In this way, it could be ensured the research instrument and the data it provided were valid. In the context of this research study, external validity was less of an issue, in that findings were not being generalised beyond the specific sample (Bryman, 2008).

Reliability is the consistency of a measure of a concept (Bryman, 2008).   Hinds (2000) concurs stating reliability is "the likelihood of the same results being obtained

if the procedures were repeated" (p. 42). A criticism often aimed at qualitative research is that reliability is particularly weak (Davidson & Tolich, 2003). However, proponents of qualitative research argue reliability is the fidelity of what is recorded compared with what actually occurs in the researched environment (Cohen et al., 2007). Reliability in the context of this study, involved the accurate replication of the questionnaire across five schools. To ensure the questionnaire provided consistent data, it was piloted by four middle level leaders from two different schools and one Board of Trustee member. The data from the pilot group was analysed to ensure the research instrument was able to reproduce similar data in different schools.

Ethical Issues

Bryman (2008) asserts "Ethical issues cannot be ignored as they relate directly to the integrity of a piece of research and of the disciplines that are involved" (p. 113). Addressing the same issue from a slightly different angle, Fontana and Frey (2005) state that when people are objects of inquiry "extreme care must be taken to avoid any harm to them" (p. 715). Similarly, Wilkinson (2001) argues that whilst research may benefit respondents, it may also have the potential to cause harm, either physically or emotionally. This is not to say that researchers should avoid research for fear of causing harm, rather they need to be aware of ethical issues, principles and concerns surrounding research (Bryman, 2008). Consequently, this research study was submitted to and approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.

In the context of this research study, one of the main ethical considerations was that of informed consent. Gaining informed consent from respondents is widely regarded as one of the key principles of research ethics (Bryman, 2008; Fontana & Frey, 2005; Wilkinson, 2001). As Wilkinson (2001) very simply states "The basic idea behind informed consent is that, if you want to do research on people, you should ask their permission first" (p. 16). However, the principle of informed consent goes beyond merely gaining participant consent, it assumes participants will be provided with as much information as they require to enable them to make an informed decision as to whether they wish to be involved in the research study (Bryman, 2008). Participants are entitled to be provided with all relevant information pertaining

to the research study in which they have been asked to be involved, including what is asked of them and what burdens, if any, they may face (Wilkinson, 2001). Furthermore, the onus is on researchers to disclose this information to participants, whether they are asked for it or not.

Gaining informed respondent consent provided a twofold benefit. Firstly, it offered the researcher a certain level of protection should respondents subsequently raise concerns. Secondly, it gave respondents "the opportunity to be fully informed of the nature of the research and the implications of their participation from the outset" (Bryman, 2008, p. 123). In order to provide respondents with the requisite information the first page of the questionnaire (Appendix One) contained the purpose and aims of the research study as well highlighting that the participant's involvement was entirely voluntary. Respondent consent was tacit in that they completed the electronic questionnaire. All schools were asked to provide written consent before they were considered for this research study.

The anonymity and confidentiality of all schools and participants involved in this research study were also ethical considerations. Hinds (2000) suggests participants "should be advised of the potential audience of the research, and given assurances about anonymity and confidentiality" (p. 48). By not using the names of any school or participant involved in this research study, anonymity and confidentiality of participants was protected. Moreover, access to the data was restricted to the researcher and the researcher's supervisor with all data being securely stored on a memory stick and held in a locked cabinet for five years after the completion of this research.

In order to avoid a conflict of interest the researcher's own school was not used in this research study. In addition, the researcher had no personal relationship with any of the organisations or participants involved in this research.

Summary

This chapter presented an overview of research methodology, locating it within a historical context. A rationale was provided for this research study's interpretive epistemology, along with an outline of participant selection and the purposive sampling approach adopted by this study. The method of data collection was discussed as well as the issues of validity and reliability. Finally, the ethical issues of this study were considered. The next chapter presents the findings of this research study.

Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the data gained from an examination of the development of middle level leaders in New Zealand secondary schools. Eight Board of Trustee members, 15 senior leaders and 37 middle level leaders completed a questionnaire. Their perspectives are presented under the headings: The importance of leadership development, Multiple perspectives of leadership development, Expectations of middle level leaders, Challenges for middle level leaders and Provision of leadership development for middle level leaders.

The Importance of Leadership Development

In order to gain an understanding of the importance placed upon middle level leadership development in New Zealand secondary schools, respondents were asked their perception of the following three statements: Leadership development of middle level leaders is considered important in my school; Leadership development should be a priority for middle leaders in my school; and Middle level leaders in my school are trained to carry out their role effectively.

Eight trustees, 15 senior leaders and 37 middle level leaders were asked to rate their perception of each statement on a six point Likert scale whereby 1 represented Strongly Disagree through to 6 which represented Strongly Agree. The following table displays respondents' perspectives of the statement: Leadership development of middle level leaders is considered important in my school.

Table 4.1: The Importance of Leadership Development

	1 Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6 Strongly Agree
Trustees	0	0	1	1	3	3
Senior leaders	0	0	0	5	3	6
Middle level leaders	0	7	8	7	11	10

Table 4.1 reveals the majority of trustees and senior leaders in this study agree in strong terms that leadership development of middle level leaders is considered important in their school. Although the majority of middle level leaders agreed with the statement, 15 middle level leaders did not agree. This highlights that middle level leaders are less confident than trustees or senior leaders that leadership development of middle level leaders is considered important in their school. Table 4.2 presents respondents' perspectives of the statement: Leadership development should be a priority for middle leaders in my school.

Table 4.2: The Priority of Leadership Development

	1 Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6 Strongly Agree
Trustees	0	0	0	0	3	5
Senior leaders	0	0	0	4	2	11
Middle level leaders	0	0	1	6	14	21

Table 4.2 shows trustees, senior leaders and middle level leaders overwhelmingly agree that leadership development of middle level leaders should be a priority at their school. The data presented in Table 4.2 highlights a similar pattern to that found in Table 4.1. Whilst the majority of middle level leaders agree with the statement, it is not as strongly as trustees and senior leaders. Table 4.3 displays respondents' perspectives of the statement: Middle level leaders in my school are trained to carry out their role effectively.

Table 4.3: Perceptions that Middle Level Leaders are Adequately Trained

	1 Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6 Strongly Agree
Trustees	0	1	1	3	3	0
Senior leaders	1	0	3	6	2	2
Middle level leaders	3	9	7	18	4	2

Table 4.3 reveals that most respondents agree that middle level leaders in their school are trained to carry out their role effectively but there is a definite trend towards strongly disagree. This is the only statement with which trustees did not strongly agree. Likewise, it is the only statement with which respondents strongly disagreed. Nevertheless, the majority of trustees and senior leaders still agreed that middle level leaders were trained to carry out their role in their school. The greatest level of disagreement with this statement came from middle level leaders. Nearly half of all middle level leader respondents did not agree that they were trained to carry out their role effectively in their school. This finding highlights a difference of perspective between trustees and senior leaders on one hand and a significant number of middle level leaders.

Although middle level leaders may perceive they are not adequately trained to carry out their role effectively, the data clearly indicates they do receive some leadership development. The following Table 4.4 displays the types of leadership development middle level leaders have undertaken in their current school.

Table 4.4: Current Leadership Development for Middle Level Leaders

Types of current leadership development	Number of respondents
Instructional leadership	25
Monitoring and evaluating staff performance	24
Developing staff	22
Strategic planning	16
Developing a vision	15
Administrative skills	12
Interpersonal skills	11
Budgeting skills	6
None	7

Middle level leaders were asked to identify the forms of leadership development they had undertaken in their current school from a list provided to them in the questionnaire. Respondents were able to select as many as necessary and there was provision for them to include additional forms of leadership development not on the list. Table 4.4 displays the forms of leadership development and the number of middle level leaders who participated in each. The list is ranked in numerical order. Despite many middle level leaders' perception that they do not receive adequate leadership development to carry out their role, only seven middle level leaders indicated that they had undertaken no leadership development of any form. All other middle level leaders had participated in at least one form of leadership development. The three most frequently identified forms of leadership development focused on instructional leadership, defined in the survey as leading the improvement of teaching and learning; monitoring and evaluating staff performance; and developing staff. Over half of all middle level leaders indicated that they had participated in these forms of leadership development. These findings highlight a conflict between

the perceptions of a significant number of middle level leaders that they are not trained to carry out their role and the fact that the majority of middle level leaders have received some form of leadership development even if it has not been recognised as such.

The Importance of Leadership Development: Key Findings

The majority of Board of Trustee members, senior leaders and middle level leaders strongly agree that leadership development for middle level leaders is considered important in their school. Furthermore, the majority of respondents believe leadership development for middle level leaders is a priority at their school; although agreement for this statement is not as strong. However, although respondents perceive leadership development for middle level leaders to be important and a priority, they are less certain that middle level leaders are receiving leadership development to carry out their role effectively. Nonetheless, it is clear that the majority of middle level leaders do receive a measure of leadership development in some form.

Multiple Perspectives of Leadership Development

In order to ensure data were interpreted accurately it was important to gain an understanding of trustees', senior leaders' and middle level leaders' perspectives of leadership development. Respondents were asked, in an open ended question, to describe their understanding of leadership development. The findings are presented from the perspectives of trustees, senior leaders and middle level leaders.

Board of Trustees' Perspectives of Leadership Development

The majority of trustees in this study described leadership development as acquiring skills in order to improve leadership capabilities. Interpersonal skills, communication skills and conflict resolution were all identified as attributes that trustees believed may improve the leadership capabilities of middle level leaders. One respondent

summarised the perspective of the majority of Board of Trustee members, describing leadership development as:

Giving leaders the skills to ensure that they are successful in their roles

Although trustees described leadership development primarily in terms of acquiring skills, five out of the eight respondents also considered leadership development to be an ongoing process underpinned by support from an experienced colleague. trustees used terms such as 'developing', 'guiding' and 'fostering' to describe leadership development. This highlights the emphasis respondents placed on the supportive aspect of leadership development. Two of the eight Board of Trustee members acknowledged the importance of providing opportunities for middle level leaders to develop their leadership capabilities. However, not one trustee acknowledged leadership development in the form of post graduate leadership and management programmes. Overall, trustees perceived leadership development to be an ongoing process supported by a senior colleague in order to acquire leadership skills.

Senior Leaders' Perspectives of Leadership Development

The majority of senior leaders in this research also described leadership development as an ongoing process. Furthermore, ten of the 15 senior leaders used language indicating that support or guidance from a colleague or senior leader was an integral part of leadership development at their school. The following comments reflect senior leaders' views of leadership development:

Leaders are developed through a blend of mentoring and formal professional learning

Learning to fulfil the role in an expert way and receive encouragement to step up to the next level if that is their goal

Leadership development is about providing opportunities for people in leadership roles to develop and improve their practice

These comments highlight the way in which support, comprising of formal mentoring and informal encouragement, is a key element of senior leaders' perception of leadership development. Nearly half of the senior leaders considered the purpose of leadership development was to develop the leadership capabilities middle level leaders who would in turn develop the leadership capabilities of their staff. In the view of these respondents, one of the primary goals of a leader is to grow other leaders. This view is summarised by the following comments:

Being able to develop an individual so they have the ability to develop others

Leading leaders to lead others

Developing the capacity to lead others

These comments emphasise the view of a significant number of senior leaders that the purpose of leadership development for middle level leaders is to enable them to develop others. What is implied from these findings is that senior leaders consider leadership development of middle level leaders to be predominantly of a practical nature and occur within the context of their own school. One respondent stated:

[Leadership development] should provide opportunity to reflect on actual practice rather than be weighted too heavily with theoretical learning

This view seems to imply an emphasis on leadership development conducted in a school context rather than through formal leadership and management programmes which are underpinned by a theoretical framework. Only one senior leader acknowledged that leadership development may occur outside of the school context, stating:

Leadership development can take place both within and beyond the school walls

This comment is as close as any of the senior leaders come to recognising the external provision of leadership development for middle level leaders. Overwhelmingly, senior leaders in this study perceive leadership development to be an ongoing process which is supported by a senior leader.

Middle Level Leaders' Perspectives of Leadership Development

Middle level leaders' perception of leadership development is similar to those of members of Boards of Trustees and senior leaders. Leadership development was described by 22 out of the 30 middle level leaders who responded to this question, as an ongoing process with support by senior leaders in order to develop leadership capabilities. Nearly half of all middle level leaders used terms such as support, mentoring or nurturing to describe leadership development. The following comments highlight middle level leaders' view that leadership development and support are closely aligned:

> *Leadership development involves providing guidance and support on how to do this effectively*

> *Distributing leadership to others so that individuals are allowed to develop their leadership ability while at the same time ensuring that individuals are adequately supported throughout the process*

> *Someone who is experienced coming along and mentoring or giving advice*

> *Recognising leadership potential and developing and nurturing these strengths*

These comments highlight the predominant perspective of middle level leaders that leadership development comprises of support from a senior colleague. In contrast, only four middle level leaders described leadership development in terms of acquiring skills. Three of these respondents suggested middle level leaders should develop skills but did not identify what these skills would be. One respondent suggested interpersonal skills would be useful for middle level leaders managing relationships. Overall, middle level leaders' perception of leadership development is an ongoing process with support provided by a senior leader.

Multiple Perspectives of Leadership Development: Key Findings
The findings of this research reveal Board of Trustee members, senior leaders and middle level leaders perceive leadership development in similar terms. The majority

of respondents at all levels view leadership development as an ongoing process underpinned by support from a senior leader within the school.

Expectations of Middle Level Leaders

Respondents were asked to describe what they perceived to be the expectations of middle level leaders in their school. This was an open ended question in which respondents were able to answer in the manner most appropriate for them. Eight trustees, 15 senior leaders and 35 middle leaders responded to this question. Table 4.5 displays the expectations that were identified and the number of respondents who identified them. The expectations are presented in descending order from most frequently identified to least frequently identified.

Table 4.5: Expectations of Middle Level Leaders

	Trustees	Senior leaders	Middle level leaders
Curriculum leadership	4	7	22
Developing staff	3	7	20
Administrative tasks	2	4	17
Improving student results	3	-	12
Implementing schools goals	2	4	8
Reporting to the Board	3	-	5
Pastoral role	-	-	5
Appraisal	-	1	3

This table summarises the expectations identified by trustees, senior leaders and middle level leaders in this study. The three most frequently identified expectations were curriculum leadership; developing staff and administrative tasks. Some expectations were also considered to be challenges however, these will be discussed separately. The expectations of middle level leaders identified in this research are now presented from the perspectives of trustees, senior leaders and middle level leaders.

Board of Trustees' Perspectives of the Expectations of Middle Level Leaders

The most frequently identified expectation of middle level leaders at Board level was leading the curriculum. For trustees this meant the development of learning programmes, leading teaching and learning and evaluating teaching programmes. Half of the trustees linked leading of the curriculum with a focus on student achievement and results. Where trustees linked curriculum leadership with student achievement they tended to also emphasise the reporting of student achievement to Boards of Trustees and parents. This view was summarised by one Board of Trustee member who stated middle leaders were expected to:

> *Continue to improve results in student achievement by a process of self reflection at faculty level and to report effectively at senior management and Board level*

Here the focus is on the improvement of student results. Trustees also expected that middle level leaders would continue to develop themselves and others. Four out of the eight Board respondents considered middle level leaders' engagement with professional development, whether their own or that of others, to be an important aspect of their role. In many cases the purpose of middle level leaders engaging in professional development was considered to be the improvement of student outcomes. This is reflected in the following comments by Board of Trustee members who expected middle level leaders to:

> *Lead teaching and learning and be lifelong learners with constant up skilling for our students to achieve*

> *Create a supportive environment where young, less experienced teachers can grow and develop in a healthy work environment and to continue to improve results in student achievement*

These comments reflect the views of many of the trustees that middle level leaders are to undertake personal development and lead the development of their staff in order to improve teaching and learning.

Undertaking administrative tasks was identified as an expectation of middle level leaders by four of the eight Board respondents. The only two administrative tasks specifically identified by trustees were maintaining budgets and ensuring departments were well resourced. Two trustees acknowledged middle level leaders had to:

Balance management their role with their teaching role

Learn the management aspects of education and how that differs from pure classroom teaching

These comments point to middle level leaders' dichotomous role which involves both a leadership role and a teaching function. Two trustees recognised implementing school wide targets or goals as an expectation of middle level leaders. Two board members stated they were not aware of what the expectations of middle level leaders were in their schools.

Generally trustees' perspectives of middle level leader expectations were broad, encompassing the full spectrum of leadership and management tasks. Perhaps not surprisingly many trustees were strongly focused on student achievement.

Senior Leaders' Perspectives of the Expectations of Middle Level Leaders

Nearly half the senior leaders identified leading the curriculum as the primary expectation of middle level leaders. Seven out of the fifteen senior leaders who responded to this question identified tasks such as curriculum leadership, academic programme design, and developing initiatives to improve student learning outcomes. Some respondents identified the purpose of these tasks to be the improvement of teaching and learning. The following senior leader comments highlight this view:

To lead their department and thus ensuring effective teaching and learning is happening

All faculty are focused on raising student achievement

These comments highlight the emphasis on improving staff performance and student outcomes yet overall senior leaders placed less emphasis on improving student achievement and student results than Board of Trustee members.

Seven senior leaders identified the development of staff as a key expectation of middle level leaders. Senior leaders described staff development in terms of middle level leaders assisting staff within their departments and building a collaborative culture, in order to assist teachers in their role. Only one senior leader explicitly identified the means by which staff development is to occur:

> *Assist with staff development through professional inquiries (effective sharing of these within the department, feeding into individual inquiries and developing departmentally focused inquiries)*

Whilst this senior leader offers a very full description of the way in which middle level leaders develop their staff, most senior leaders provided broad descriptors of staff development.

Administration was identified as an expectation of middle level leaders by four out of fifteen senior leaders. Senior leaders did not identify specific administrative tasks but described it in general terms such as day to day management, meeting administrative tasks and administering learning areas. One senior leader stated:

> *Management first, leadership second*

However, this comment was the exception; senior leaders in this study generally placed greater emphasis on leading rather than managing.

Four senior leaders identified the implementation of school wide goals into departments or learning areas as an expectation of middle level leaders. These senior leaders stated the expectation of middle level leaders in their school was to:

> *Lead their team to achieve the vision of the school*

To work within their area of responsibility on achieving the overall vision and goals of the school

Collective vision translated into their area

These comments highlight the central position of middle level leaders within the school hierarchy and their role as liaisons between senior leaders and their departments.

Similar to Board of Trustee members, senior leaders' responses were broad, describing the expectations of middle level leaders in general terms. Although senior leaders tended to place more emphasis leadership functions they did acknowledge that middle level leaders also had a management function.

Middle Level Leaders' Perspectives of the Expectations of Middle Level Leaders

The majority of middle level leaders, 22 of the 35 respondents, identified leading the curriculum as an expectation of their role. Some middle level leaders described leading the curriculum in broad terms such as leading and developing curriculum, programme planning, and developing new courses. Others, were more specific, describing tasks they were expected to undertake including: providing course outlines, meeting New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) requirements, and developing and moderating assessment procedures. As with Board of Trustee members and senior leaders, middle level leaders linked leading the curriculum with student achievement. 12 of the 35 middle level leaders described the purpose of their curriculum leadership as improving student results. They described their curriculum leadership role in the following terms:

To make educational changes that will lead to improved student outcomes

Drive curriculum and ensure that students are achieving at a high level

To review and reflect on student achievement and strategise on how to improve learning outcomes for students

Keep an eye on curriculum, appraisal and student success rates

These comments reflect the close alignment of middle level leaders' curriculum leadership role and student achievement. In addition, some middle level leaders identified a subsequent responsibility of tracking and monitoring student results.

A significant number of middle level leaders, 20 of 35 respondents, identified developing staff as an expectation of middle level leadership in their school. This view reflected those of Board of Trustee members and senior leaders. Middle level leaders did not acknowledge that they were an expected to undertake their own personal development but spoke only of developing others. The terms used by the majority of middle level leaders to describe staff development in their department were of a supportive nature including: mentoring; supporting; nurturing; empowering; guiding and looking after staff. Implicit in most middle level leaders' comments is that the development of staff is predominantly informal and underpinned by collegial relationships. The supportive language used by middle level leaders also stands to highlight the strength of departmental relationships. Three middle level leaders even expressed a sense of responsibility for the pastoral care of their staff, stating they:

> *Provide guidance to staff in their department both personal and professional*

> *Support the professional development needs and pastoral care needs of our department's teachers*

> *Provide for the pastoral care of students, families and staff*

These comments emphasise the supportive approach of staff development adopted by middle level leaders and reveals the wider scope of middle level leaders' departmental responsibilities concerning their staff.

Administration was also a frequently identified expectation. Half of the middle level leaders in this study identified administration as an expectation for middle level leaders at their school. The majority of middle level leaders were very general in

their description of the administrative tasks they were expected to undertake, such as: managing the day to day operations of the department, administrative organisation or keeping up to date with the day to day tasks. Only two middle level leaders explicitly articulated their administrative tasks:

> *Maintain and implement managerial and administrative systems such as moderation, budgets, reporting and tracking*

> *Run a department. Admin – update course booklets, department manuals, new NCEA course requirements*

As revealed by these comments, many of middle level leaders administrative tasks are compliance orientated and revolve around matters of assessment. Middle level leaders used the terms administration and management interchangeably. Implementing school wide goals within their department was considered an expectation by 8 of the 35 of middle level leaders. This expectation was expressed as implementing annual or strategic plans into departments. Furthermore, there was an expectation that middle level leaders would liaise between senior leaders and their departments. One middle level leader described this in negative terms stating:

> *There is an expectation that we attend Management and Curriculum meetings but our but our input is negligible*

For five of the 35 respondents liaising with senior leaders and Boards of Trustees was in the form of reporting their department's performance. Reporting student achievement and data analysis were the two areas specifically identified. Moreover, five middle level leaders identified they were expected to undertake pastoral responsibilities. This was primarily in the form of maintaining discipline within their departments.

Only three of the 35 middle level leaders identified appraising staff as an expectation in their school. They did not describe the practices or procedures involved with such an expectation. This finding is surprisingly low considering that more than half of middle level leaders in this study have undertaken leadership development that focuses on monitoring and evaluating staff performance.

In addition to the expectations identified in this study, some middle level leaders expressed a feeling that they were expected to tackle any task that may arise:

> *It is just an expectation that you know how to do it all and are able to cope regardless of training. You have been employed to do the job and the expectation is that you will do it.*

> *It seems expected that you know what you're doing and often terms like 'sink or swim' and 'trial of fire' between colleagues when talking about going into responsibility roles in teaching.*

> *I am expected to lead teachers when I am still figuring out how to do my own job effectively.*

These comments reveal the frustration experienced by some of the middle level leaders in this study who perceive that they are not supported or adequately trained to carry out their role. Not surprisingly, responses given by middle level leaders were more specific in relation to their role compared with those given by members of Boards of Trustees and senior leaders. Middle level leaders identified a wide and varying range of tasks they were expected to perform such as curriculum leadership, developing staff, administration and implementing school wide goals.

The Expectations of Middle Level Leaders: Key Findings

There is a high degree of congruence between Board of Trustee members', senior leaders' and middle level leaders' perspectives of the expectations of middle level leaders. Each group agrees that the four main expectations of middle level leaders are: leading the implementation of the curriculum within their subject or curriculum area in order to improve student performance; staff development; administrative tasks; and implementing school wide goals into departments. However, some middle level leaders feel they are expected to tackle any task thrown at them.

Challenges for Middle level Leaders

The considerable expectations placed on middle level leaders in New Zealand secondary schools have created a range of challenges. Members of Boards of Trustees, senior leaders and middle level leaders were asked to describe what they perceived to be the challenges of middle level leaders in their school. This was an open ended question in which respondents were able to answer in the manner most appropriate for them. Eight trustees, 15 senior leaders and 35 middle leaders responded to this question. Table 4.5 displays the challenges that were identified and the number of respondents who identified them. The challenges are presented in descending order from most frequently identified to least frequently identified.

Table 4.6: Challenges for Middle Level Leaders

	Trustees	Senior leaders	Middle level leaders
Lack of time	4	9	22
Professional development	2	5	11
Implementing school goals	2	5	8
Workload	-	-	8
Staffing issues	-	-	6
Leading curriculum	3	-	-

This table summarises the challenges identified by trustees, senior leaders and middle level leaders in this study. These challenges are now presented from the perspectives of trustees, senior leaders and middle level leaders.

Board of Trustees' Perspectives of the Challenges for Middle Level Leaders

Four of the eight Board respondents identified a lack of time as a challenge facing middle level leaders in their schools. Two respondents made very general comments merely stating the challenge for middle level leaders was a lack of time. The other two trustees were more specific, identifying the way in which time was a challenge for middle level leaders. One suggested the lack of non contact time impinged on middle level leaders' management responsibilities. The other Board of

Trustee asserted a lack of time impeded middle level leaders' ability to develop themselves professionally.

Three of the eight Board respondents identified raising student achievement as a challenge for middle level leaders. They perceived that middle level leaders faced difficulty creating courses and programmes of work that engage students and lead to student achievement.

Two Board respondents identified professional development as a challenge for middle level leaders in their schools. They questioned whether the professional development available is appropriate and whether middle level leaders have the opportunity to practise and develop the skills they acquire through undertaking professional development. One Board of Trustee suggested a lack of time restricted the amount of self development middle level leaders were able to undertake.

In addition, two trustees perceived a challenge for middle level leaders to be working within the larger school wide context. However, one Board of Trustee member questioned middle level leaders' ability to 'see the bigger picture' outside of the classroom.

Trustees in this study acknowledge the complexities of middle level leaders' role and its associated challenges. They identify a lack of time as the main challenge faced by middle level leaders, along with raising student achievement, a lack of professional development opportunities and working within the wider school context.

Senior Leaders' Perspectives of the Challenges for Middle Level Leaders

Nine out of 15 senior leaders described a lack of time as a challenge for middle level leaders in their schools. None of the senior leaders articulated how a lack of time hindered or challenged middle level leaders at their school, rather 'time' was identified as a challenge in broad terms, such as the lack of allocated time to undertake management tasks. Two senior leaders acknowledged time management

was a challenge, however, it is unclear whether they were describing the way in which middle level leaders use their time or the amount of non contact time middle level leaders are provided to undertake their role.

The second most frequent challenge identified by senior leaders was middle level leaders' professional development. Senior leaders' responses were varied; two respondents identified a lack of personal development opportunities for middle leaders as a challenge. Another senior leader noted the challenge for middle level leaders was supporting and developing each other. One senior leader implied the opportunities for professional development were available and that the challenge is middle level leaders making use of them:

> *To be aware of the opportunities to develop by taking advantage of the professional learning opportunities that exist*

> *Another senior leader acknowledged professional development was available but highlighted that the challenge was in the way in which it was delivered*

> *The balance between learning on the job in a supported environment and receiving external training specifically for the role*

Senior leaders in this study recognise the difficulties for middle level leaders accessing adequate professional development to equip them for their role. The varied nature of their responses highlights the issue may be a broad one.

Five out of 15 senior leaders identified middle level leaders' ability to lead their departments in the context of the wider school as potentially challenging. One senior leader identified middle level leaders' complex position within the school hierarchy, stating the middle level leaders' role was to:

> *Bridge the gap between faculty and school wide focus*

However, some senior leaders perceived middle level leaders to have a narrow focus which did not take into account the wider school aims. This view is reflected in the following comments:

Being able to see leadership through different lens, not solely focusing on the staff's subject area

Lots of good stuff going on in silos

These comments highlight senior leaders' perception that some middle level leaders do not look beyond their department to consider the wider school in which they act. Interestingly, only three of the 15 senior leaders in this study identified dealing with difficult staff was as a challenge for middle level leaders. This is reflected in the leadership development provided to middle level leaders, leadership development dealing with interpersonal skills was identified as the second to lowest frequency.

Overall, senior leaders identified similar challenges to members of Boards of Trustees. The three main challenges identified by senior leaders were: a lack of time; the accessibility of professional development for middle level leaders; and leading departments within the wider school context.

Middle Level Leaders' Perspectives of the Challenges for Middle Level Leaders

The majority of middle level leaders in this study perceived a lack of time to be challenge to them undertaking their role. In comparison to Board of Trustee members and senior leaders, middle level leaders were very specific in describing how a lack of time impacted on their role. Many of the respondents used emotive language which gave voice to their sense of frustration. A main concern was the amount of non contact time allocated to middle level leaders and how this impacted on their ability to perform their role effectively. This was expressed by the following comments:

The challenges I face are time management and setting boundaries within non contact time to actually be able to do work without being interrupted

Very little time given to do your job well and as a result you are just keeping on top of things with no time to investigate or develop any new or improved systems

Need more release time to get things done in school time

Evident from these comments is that middle level leaders find it challenging to undertake their role in the non contact allocated to them. For eight middle level leaders, a lack of time created a tension between having sufficient time to manage and lead their departments while still trying to maintain a teaching load. These middle level leaders articulated the tension in this way:

A lack of time to cover all aspects of administration and still teach a full timetable

Time or lack of it to do a good job both as a leader and a classroom teacher

Time to manage and facilitate all the roles as well as managing a teaching load

These comments express the frustration of some middle level leaders that their leadership and management functions encroached into time allocated for lesson preparation and planning. Moreover, middle level leaders complained of increased workload or added responsibilities. Eight middle level leaders clearly felt the pressure of the increased workload combined with a lack of time, very stressful:

It seems more jobs will be piled on if, as a staff member, I allow it to. I am aware of issues like burnout for young teachers in positions like mine

Workload – because we are forever being given new opportunities to develop new aspects of our departments. We are expected to keep up with these developments

These comments reflect the perception of some middle level leaders who are struggling to maintain a demanding role due to a heavy workload. This increased

workload only exacerbates the lack of time experienced by the majority of middle level leaders in this study.

11 out of the 34 middle level leaders in this research identified a lack of specific leadership development to enable them to undertake their role as a challenge. Some middle level leaders expressed concern they were expected to learn the role as they went without support or training. Middle level leaders in this study were very honest in their comments:

> *I am expected to be supportive of others in my department but often feel unsupported myself. Nobody likes to appear as if they are not coping*

> *I was thrown in the deep end a bit and did, in many ways, learn 'on the job'*

> *No formal training on skills for middle management*

> *Lack of leadership expertise, lack of theoretical knowledge and up to date research, lack of pedagogical knowledge, lack of experience in appraisal and challenging conversations*

> *I found pre-service teacher support another job that was pushed upon me before I was ready but I have learnt a lot from these steep learning curves*

These comments clearly highlight the perception of a significant number of middle level leaders who feel they do not receive leadership development to undertake their role effectively. One middle level leader suggested the consequence of a lack of leadership development was that:

> *This is not a position other teachers are keen to take on and further development of these positions is not present*

Despite the majority of middle level leaders in this study undertaking at least one form of leadership development nearly half perceive they do not receive adequate leadership development. A lack of leadership development was the second most frequent challenge identified by middle level leaders in this research.

Eight out of 35 middle level leaders identified the tension of leading their departments within the context of the wider school aims as challenging. For some the tension was a result of trying to implement wider school goals into their departments which they perceived as contrary to their department needs:

> *I am constantly fighting for others to understand that practical subjects such as ours have totally different responsibilities to other subjects*

> *Subsequently, some middle level leaders felt caught in an invidious position as the following comment highlights:*

> *Experiencing pressure from the team and simultaneously experiencing pressure from above. We are often caught in the middle.*

Some middle level leaders felt this tension was created by school wide goals which were contradictory or perceived as unattainable:

> *Too many demands from Senior Leadership Team each driven by their own portfolios*

> *Lacking the infrastructure to realise goals set, not only by ourselves, but also those above us*

These comments reveal the perception of some middle level leaders that they are disenfranchised by what they view as Boards of Trustees and senior leaders making decisions in which they have no voice but are expected to implement. This finding highlights a difference of perspectives between middle level leaders and senior leaders, with each pointing the finger at the other as the cause of the tension.

Staffing issues or dealing with staff was identified as a challenge by six middle level leaders. Issues relating to staffing tended to revolve around staff not cooperating in the way middle level leaders felt they should. Middle level leaders in this study identified staff not meeting results targets, staff not willing to adopt change and staff not working within a team environment. One middle leader summarised this issue succinctly:

The most difficult are staffing issues

This comment emphasises an issue which is, surprisingly, identified only by a small number of middle level leaders in this study. This finding reflects the relatively small level of participation by middle level leaders in leadership development which focuses on interpersonal skills.

The Challenges for Middle Level Leaders: Key Findings

The majority of respondents in this study identify the greatest challenge facing middle level leaders to be a lack of time to undertake their role. For some middle level leaders this is further exacerbated by an increased workload. Moreover, Board of Trustee members, senior leaders and middle level leaders highlight a lack of leadership development for middle level leaders as a challenge. Leading a department within a wider school context is also acknowledged as a challenge facing middle level leaders. However, senior leaders tend to perceive the challenge is middle level leaders' narrow focus on their own subject area.

Provision of Leadership Development for Middle Level Leaders

Middle level leaders were asked to identify which forms of leadership development they felt would be of use to middle level leaders in their school from the list provided to them; respondents were able to select as many as necessary. There was also provision for respondents to include additional forms of leadership development that may not have been on the list, two were included: continued subject learning and having difficult conversations. Table 4.7 displays the forms of leadership development middle level leaders believe would be of benefit to them undertaking their role. The list is ranked in numerical order.

Table 4.7: Potential Leadership Development for Middle Level Leaders

Types of potential leadership development	Number of respondents
Developing staff	33
Monitoring and evaluating staff performance	27
Strategic planning	27
Developing a vision	25
Instructional leadership	24
Budgeting skills	22
Interpersonal skills	22
Administrative skills	18
None	1

Table 4.7 reveals some interesting findings. Despite only very few middle level leaders identifying monitoring and evaluating staff performance and strategic planning as either an expectation or challenge, they feature prominently in the list of potential leadership development identified by middle level leaders. In addition, respondents were given the opportunity to respond in an open format. These responses are now presented from the perspectives of members of Boards of Trustees, senior leaders and middle level leaders.

Board of Trustees' Perspectives of the Provision of Leadership Development

The Board of Trustee members' responses regarding further leadership opportunities for middle level leaders are diverse. There is some consensus, three of the eight respondents identifying leadership development focusing on interpersonal skills as beneficial for middle level leaders. Other suggestions include middle leader conferences, 'in house' courses run by senior leaders, change management and conducting performance appraisals. One respondent suggests two factors that may hinder further leadership development for middle level leaders are funding and a lack of time. Another Board member stated:

> *No training is provided from what I have seen and heard and managers are*
> *expected to learn on the job. So any development would be good*

It was noted by one Board of Trustee member that further leadership development for middle level leaders should be contextual; dependent on the individual's needs but aligned with the school's strategic goals.

Senior Leaders' Perspectives of the Provision of Leadership Development

Similar to trustees' perspectives, senior leaders' responses were wide ranging. Four of the 12 senior leaders who responded to this question identified a collaborative approach of leadership development in which middle level leaders receive support or mentoring from an experienced colleague from within their school. This was expressed in the following comments:

> *Opportunities for those middle leaders to get together and learn from each other and to share best practice with colleagues*

> *Having the opportunity to take on roles to fill in for others. This hands on experience of leadership, within a supportive team, seems to be valued*

> *Shadowing – observing people leading meetings and resolving issues*

These comments reveal the model of leadership development favoured by some senior leaders in this study. In addition, three senior leaders identified leadership development that focused on interrelational skills; productive conversations with staff and developing questioning and listening skills as beneficial for middle level leaders. Senior leaders stated:

> *Interpersonal – in my opinion is the key skill/capability of successful leaders*

> *Relationship training, how to have courageous conversations with their staff*

Furthermore, two senior leaders suggested more time for middle level leaders to engage in reflective practice and more efficient access to external research and expertise.

Senior leaders in this study identified leadership development that focused on interrelational skills; involved support in the form of mentoring; is contextual and is accompanied by time in which middle level leaders can reflect upon and practice what they have learnt.

Middle Level Leaders' Perspectives of the Provision of Leadership Development

Middle level leaders' responses were more homogenous than those of Board of Trustees or senior leaders. In line with senior leader perspectives, the most frequent response from middle level leaders related to a collaborative or shared approach towards leadership development.   Nine out of the 30 middle level leaders who answered this question described a model of leadership development which involved mentoring or support from a senior colleague:

> *Mentoring (either peer or SMT led)*

> *Good systems shared across leaders*

> *Regular discussion, once a month would be good, with senior management to ensure middle management is in line with strategic plan and policies*

> *Time to be with other leaders at that level to exchange ideas*

These comments emphasise the model of leadership development most frequently identified by middle level leaders in this study. Middle level leaders also identified interpersonal professional development as beneficial. Eight of the 30 middle level leaders described leadership development which equipped them to deal with staff as important for middle level leaders to undertake. Areas they identified as needing further development included: building and managing relationships, conflict resolution and listening skills.

Eight out of 30 middle level leaders also identified leadership development courses which prepare middle level leaders for their role. However, they did not specify content for such leadership development:

Training around what to expect

More on the job PD

Courses – the opportunity to attend courses

Some are more specific suggesting:

Professional development opportunities to grow leaders

Continued development in all areas to keep up with best practice

More middle leaders to attend 'Middle Leaders' courses

Whilst these comments highlight middle level leaders' interest in attending 'courses', it is interesting that no middle level leader in this study identifies post graduate leadership and management courses.

Five middle level leaders felt they would benefit from receiving more time to implement and reflect on the professional development they had received so far or to spend with other middle level leaders to share experiences.

Of the 30 respondents who answered this question, four said they were unsure of what further leadership development opportunities would benefit middle level leaders. One middle level leader summarised the feeling of many middle level leaders stating, with regards to leadership development:

Any would be better than what is currently not in place

Provision for Leadership Development: Key Findings

Board of Trustee members, senior leaders and middle level leaders predominantly favour a model of leadership development which includes mentoring or support from a senior colleague. Moreover, they propose middle level leaders would benefit from engaging in leadership development which improves interrelational skills.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings gained from an examination of the development of middle level leaders in New Zealand secondary schools. These findings revealed that middle level leaders are expected to perform a multitude of functions including: leading the curriculum within their department in order to improve student performance; developing; administrative tasks and implementing school wide goals into departments. The complexity of middle level leaders' role has created a number of challenges such as: a lack of time to undertake their role, a lack of leadership development and leading their departments within the wider school context. The expectations and challenges of middle level leaders will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five

Discussion of Findings

Introduction

This chapter analyses the findings reported in Chapter Four and discusses them in the context of the literature presented in Chapter Two. The findings discussed in this chapter are presented under the headings: expectations of middle level leaders and challenges for middle level leaders.

Expectations of Middle Level Leaders

Leading the Curriculum

This research reveals that the majority of trustees, senior leaders and middle level leaders identified leading the curriculum as the main expectation of middle level leaders in their school. This finding supports research conducted by Fitzgerald and Gunter (2006) which identifies the pivotal role middle level leaders play in the leadership of learning. In the literature, the role of leading teaching and learning is often referred to as instructional leadership (Bush, 2008; Hallinger, 2003; Poultney, 2007). Traditionally, instructional leadership has been considered the role of the principal. However, due to their increased responsibilities, instructional leadership in secondary schools is often delegated to middle level leaders (Cardno & Collett, 2004). Therefore, in this study the curriculum leadership role performed by middle level leaders reflects the literature relating to instructional leadership. In this context, middle level leaders are viewed as the instructional leaders of their departments.

Middle level leaders in this study indicated that their curriculum leadership responsibilities included: leading and developing the curriculum; planning learning programmes; meeting NZQA requirements; and managing moderating procedures. It is unclear whether the emphasis of these activities were considered to be the

improvement of teaching and learning or whether they were viewed as compliance tasks. Poultney (2007) asserts a key focus of curriculum leadership is improving the quality of teaching and learning within subject areas. Similarly, Robinson et al. (2009) contend that the emphasis of curriculum leadership is establishing educational goals, planning the curriculum, and evaluating teachers and teaching. What is clear from this research is that many of the curriculum related tasks performed by middle level leaders were assessment focused. This may be a result of the importance placed on improving student results by a significant number of trustees and even, middle level leaders themselves. Busher and Harris (2000) acknowledge the amplified use of student achievement data to measure the value added to student learning. However, they warn that in some schools, performance data may be used to blame subjects or teachers for poor results. Nearly half of the middle level leaders in this study felt responsibility for the results achieved by students in their departments. In particular, that students were achieving the same levels of attainment as students in schools of similar size and context. This emphasises the extent that middle level leaders' role as curriculum leader is linked with student attainment. Consequently, some middle level leaders reported spending a significant amount of time measuring, recording and reporting student results to senior leaders and their Board of Trustees. Therefore, whilst middle level leaders in this study are expected to lead the curriculum and the improvement of teaching and learning, much of their curriculum leadership role is focused on the management of assessment.

Developing Staff

Evidence from this study emphasises the expectation that middle level leaders are responsible for developing the staff in their departments. Over half of all respondents in this research articulated the key role middle level leaders play in the professional development of their staff. This finding reflects the Ministry of Education's (2012a) view that middle level leaders are responsible for leading and engaging in the professional development of their staff. Robinson et al. (2009) endorse the concept of school leaders promoting and participating in professional

learning, however, they point to the paucity of research focusing on subject leaders in secondary schools fulfilling this role.

The majority of middle level leaders in this research describe a collegial approach to staff development including: mentoring beginning teachers and new staff; supervising report writing; providing professional guidance; developing teacher practice; and leading professional development sessions. Most of the staff development described by middle level leaders was of an individual, informal nature, similar to the 'in the corridor' discussions of teaching practice described by Robinson et al. (2009). This 'on the run' approach of developing staff, reflects research by Busher and Harris (2000) who suggest opportunities for middle level leaders to engage their staff in learning conversations occur naturally within departments. However, Adey (2000) argues that although middle level leaders are responsible for staff performance in their departments, control of overall professional development of staff is still held by senior leaders. He contends that if middle level leaders are given responsibility for staff performance without the corresponding responsibility for overall professional development, it may lead to an erosion of collegial relationships within departments. This is a key point considering the emphasis senior leaders and middle level leaders in this study place on collegial relationships when developing staff. Some middle level leaders even expressed a sense of responsibility for the development of their staff personally as well as professionally. Busher and Harris (2000) assert that maintaining a collaborative culture is important for middle level leaders to effectively develop their staff. Consequently, any erosion of collegial relationships within departments may hinder the informal collegial model of staff development adopted by middle level leaders in this research.

This study further reveals that whilst middle level leaders are responsible for developing their staff, they perceive that they are not developed themselves. Some middle level leaders expressed a sense of injustice that they were expected to support others in their teams without commensurate support from senior leaders. Cardno (2012) identifies the importance of school leaders investing in the development of others in the school hierarchy, such as middle level leaders, in order

to improve teacher quality. Evidence from this study indicates that this may not be happening in practice.

The view of middle level leaders that they are not developed is in conflict with the perceptions of many of the senior leaders in this study. Not one senior leader indicated that middle level leaders lacked the leadership development or support to undertake their role. In fact, the majority of senior leaders perceived that middle level leaders are equipped with the capacity to develop the staff in their departments. Furthermore, nearly half of the senior leaders suggested that middle level leaders were developed so they could, in turn, develop the capacity of others. This contrast of perceptions between senior leaders and middle level leaders has been identified in previous research. Chetty (2007) found that senior leaders perceived that middle level leaders received adequate leadership development whilst middle level leaders felt they did not receive adequate leadership development to undertake their leadership role. Evidence from this research, however, supports senior leaders' perspective. The majority of middle level leaders in this study have received some training in staff development, despite their view that they are not supported.

Some trustees suggest that middle level leaders should be responsible for their own professional development. This may be an unrealistic expectation considering the heavy workload experienced by middle level leaders, combined with the lack of time they have to carry out their role effectively. Fitzgerald (2009) states middle level leaders are completing work at home in order to maintain their workload. Therefore, the expectation that middle level leaders should provide their own professional development would add even greater pressure onto what is an already exhaustive workload.

Administrative Tasks

A finding of this research is that administrative tasks are a fundamental aspect of middle level leadership. Board of Trustee members, senior leaders and middle level leaders in this study detailed a wide range of administrative duties, spanning several

areas of responsibility. Trustees and senior leaders described middle level leaders' administrative duties in broad terms such as meeting administrative tasks and day to day management.   Middle level leaders, in comparison, were more specific, identifying functions including: administering moderation systems; tracking and recording student achievement; maintaining budgets; producing department manuals; and reporting to the Board of Trustees. Kemp and Nathan (1995) suggest middle level leaders' administrative tasks generally fall into one of three categories: day to day tasks which contribute to the effective operation of the department; administering departmental tasks that contribute to the wider school, such as assessments and class trips; and dealing with any miscellaneous task which may occur daily and require action. The administrative tasks identified by the majority of middle level leaders in this study cover the full spectrum of these categories.

Respondents in this research articulated the purpose of administrative tasks as the management of systems and resources in order to develop an effective department. This definition finds favour with Bush (2008) who describes administration as a function which supports educational purposes. Similarly, the Ministry of Education (2012a) identifies the management of administrative systems and practices as a responsibility of middle level leaders. They assert the purpose of administrative practices is to support safe and ordered learning environments. However, despite the view that administrative tasks provide a context in which teaching and learning occurs, very little leadership development is provided in this area. Only a quarter of middle level leaders in this study received leadership development to equip them with administrative skills. Even fewer received training in budgeting, which is considered a key aspect of administration and one in which middle level leaders generally, report very little confidence (Adey, 2000).

A further finding of this research is that some middle level leaders experience difficulty balancing their administrative function with their teaching load. Some middle level leaders complained of having to complete administrative tasks during the time they had been allocated for planning and preparing lessons. The significant impact of administration tasks on middle level leaders' role is well documented (Fitzgerald, 2009). Busher (2005) contends that administrative tasks of middle level

leaders encroach into their teaching time. This view was reinforced by some trustees in this study who agreed middle level leaders had to cope with significant administrative tasks with little additional time made available. Peak (2010) identified that middle level leaders would rather focus on the improvement of teaching and learning within their department, yet felt hindered by administrative tasks. Adey (2000) highlights a conflict between the perception that the role of middle level leaders is primarily managerial compared with their role as a school leader.

The majority of trustees, senior leaders and middle level leaders in this study emphasised the leadership aspect of middle level leaders' role, despite the bulk of their time being spent on compliance driven administrative tasks such as: meeting NZQA requirements; provide course outlines; developing moderating procedures; and monitor student achievement. Wise and Bennett (2003) suggest that middle level leaders may place undue emphasis on administrative tasks because they are more visible to others in the school. Moreover, Glover et al. (1999) contend middle level leaders may claim that they are overloaded with administrative tasks as an excuse for avoiding tasks they view as contentious, such as monitoring staff performance. Nonetheless, it is clear from this research that administration dominates much of middle level leaders' time and constitutes an integral part of their role, despite the emphasis placed on middle level leaders' leadership role by trustees, senior leaders and middle level leaders.

The expectations placed upon the middle level leaders in this study are varied, complex and demanding. Middle level leaders are expected to lead the curriculum within their departments, develop their staff and undertake a significant amount of administrative duties. This research highlights that the expanded role of middle level leaders has led to a raft of challenges which many middle level leaders do not feel equipped to face.

Challenges for Middle Level Leaders

Lack of Time

Findings from this research indicate one of the most difficult challenges facing middle level leaders is a lack of time to undertake their role effectively. The overwhelming majority of Board of Trustee members, senior leaders and middle level leaders identified a lack of allocated non contact time as an issue hindering the role of middle level leaders. In particular, some middle level leaders in this research found it difficult balancing the time demands of their leadership function with their teaching role. They described managing their time to complete their leadership tasks and setting boundaries within non contact time as a challenge. Research investigating middle level leaders in Australia, identified a "lack of time to perform the various aspects of the role was the worst aspect of the position" (Dinham, 2007, p. 63). Wise and Bennett (2003) argue the non contact time allocated to middle level leaders is not commensurate with the expectations associated with their role. Adey (2000) concurs, stating that the expectations placed on middle level leaders exceed the time allocation with which they are provided.

The consequence of a lack of time in this research was that some middle level leaders perceived that they were not performing either their leadership role or their teaching role to a satisfactory level. This tension has been previously highlighted by Fitzgerald (2009) who asserts that middle level leaders' time is often taken up with departmental demands. Furthermore, middle level leaders in this study claimed the issue of a lack of time is exacerbated by an increased workload. Several middle level leaders expressed frustration that despite barely coping to maintain their current workload within the time allocated, more tasks were being added to their role. They felt the more they appeared to cope with the workload, the greater the expectation was for them to do more. Interestingly, whilst Board of Trustee members and senior leaders in this study acknowledged that a lack of allocated time is a challenge for middle level leaders, they did not refer to the issue of increased workload for middle level leaders or its impact on their role. It is unclear whether trustees and senior leaders were aware of middle level leaders' heavy workload.

Lack of Leadership Development

A key finding of this research is that nearly half the middle level leaders surveyed consider that they are not adequately trained to perform their role as departmental leader. Findings from this research indicated middle level leaders do not feel equipped with the requisite skills. This finding echoes an earlier study by Adey (2000) where over half the middle level leaders reported they had not received any leadership development to equip them for their role. Brown et al. (2002) point out the common misconception that those appointed to middle level leadership positions already possess the leadership skills required for the position. Middle level leaders in this study perceived that they learnt their role through trial and error rather than through formal planned leadership development.

The view that middle level leaders are not adequately trained is not entirely supported by Board of Trustee members and senior leaders. Whilst some Board of Trustee members and senior leaders acknowledge leadership development for middle level leaders is an issue, they claim leadership development is available. Several senior leaders contend that leadership development opportunities exist but middle level leaders are not making use of them. Chetty (2007) identified that senior leaders perceived middle level leaders were reticent to engage in leadership development. Whilst this could be seen as a defensive response by those responsible for developing middle level leaders, senior leaders in this study may have a point. Findings from this research show the majority of middle level leaders do receive some leadership development in some form. Only seven out of 37 middle level leaders claimed to have not undertaken any leadership development in their current school. All other middle level leaders had participated in at least one form of leadership development including: instructional leadership; monitoring and evaluating staff; developing staff; strategic planning; developing a vision; administrative skills; interpersonal skills; and budgeting. This finding reveals a greater level of participation leaders in leadership development by middle level compared to earlier research that reported only half of the middle level leaders surveyed had received leadership development (Adey, 2000; Dinham, 2007; Harding, 1990). Therefore, findings from this study indicate the majority of middle

level leaders do receive a measure of leadership development to carry out their role effectively, despite their perception to the contrary.

This contradiction of perspectives may be explained by the way in which middle level leaders define leadership development. The overwhelming majority of middle level leaders in this study described leadership development as an ongoing process supported by senior leaders. Furthermore, a third of all middle level leaders favour a model of leadership development which includes mentoring. It could be argued that the development received by middle leaders in this study does not fit their definition of leadership development and as a result they feel that they are not developed. Harding (1990) suggests middle level leaders may "only feel satisfaction with a course if it is relevant to their needs" (p. 31). Several Board of Trustee members confirm this view by questioning the relevance of the professional development available to middle level leaders in their school.

Whilst the majority of trustees, senior leaders and middle level leaders in this research espouse a model of leadership development which is ongoing and includes support from a more experienced colleague or mentor, evidence indicates that in practice this is not being enacted. Moreover, other models of leadership development were not recognised by the majority of trustees, senior leaders and middle level leaders. Only very few respondents identified post graduate leadership and management courses or their ability to provide leadership development for middle level leaders. Trustees', senior leaders' and middle level leaders' reliance on school based leadership development could be for a number of reasons. Firstly, middle level leaders already face an enormous workload which, for some, encroaches into their home life (Fitzgerald, 2009). This may be an inhibiting factor of middle level leaders' involvement with tertiary institutions. Secondly, professional development budget restrictions faced by schools make school based leadership development a more viable proposition. Finally, it may be conjectured that middle level leaders are unaware of the leadership development made available by tertiary institutions.

In addition, there is a lack of provision for middle level leadership development at national level. Although leadership development programmes are provided for principals and those who aspire to be principals (Ministry of Education, 2012b), there are no national development programmes which aim to improve the leadership capacity of middle level leaders, despite the importance placed upon middle level leadership. The Ministry of Education's (2012a) 'Leading from the Middle' outlines the roles and responsibilities of middle level leaders, however, it does not suggest the means by which schools or middle level leaders may improve their leadership capacity. It may be argued that the lack of focus on the development of middle level leaders at national policy level influences the lack of priority given to leadership development of middle level leaders at school level.

Tensions of Leading a Department within the Wider School Context

A further finding of this research is the tension of leading a department within the context of the wider school context. This confirms studies by Feist (2008) and Fitzgerald (2009) who contend middle level leaders experience tension undertaking a leadership role which positions them within the school's management hierarchy on one hand, and leading teaching and learning within departments on the other. Middle level leaders in this study offered several explanations for this tension. Firstly, they felt tension was created as a consequence of trying to implement school wide goals which they perceived to be divergent from the aims of their departments. Secondly, middle level leaders experienced the invidious position of being caught between senior leaders and the members of their team. Busher (2005) asserts that middle level leaders act as agents for senior leaders whilst at the same time acting as advocates for their colleagues against senior leader decisions. Similarly, Bennett et al. (2007) propose middle level leaders may be caught between loyalty to their departments and their role as leaders with a school wide focus. In contrast, several senior leaders in this research challenged the narrow focus of middle level leaders, stressing middle level leaders need to look beyond the needs of their own departments or faculties. This reflects research by Glover et al. (1999) who noted senior leaders were critical of middle level leaders for being too reluctant to engage

in whole school change, emphasising the need for further training in this area for middle level leaders. In comparison, middle level leaders in this study were critical of senior leaders, claiming tension was created by school wide goals which were contradictory or unattainable. Senior leaders were accused of driving their own portfolios, thereby placing conflicting demands on middle level leaders. As a result, middle level leaders considered that they were without a voice in the development of wider school policy despite the expectation they would implement it in their subject areas.

Summary

This chapter has discussed the findings of this research in the context of the literature presented in Chapter Two. The discussion of these findings were presented under two broad headings: expectations of middle level leaders and challenges of middle level leaders. Under the heading 'expectations of middle level leaders' the roles and functions of middle level leaders was discussed. In particular, leading the curriculum, developing staff and administration were examined. Under the heading 'challenges of middle level leaders' the discussion identified a number of challenges facing middle level leaders such as: a lack of time; a lack of leadership development; and the tension of leading a department with the context of the wider school. It was identified that these challenges stem from middle level leaders' role which many do not feel adequately prepared to contend. The following chapter presents conclusions and recommendations of the research findings discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Six

Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

This research stems from concerns related to my experiences as a middle level leader in three New Zealand secondary schools. As a middle level leader, I have received school wide and curriculum related professional development, however, I have not been provided with specific leadership development. It was my assumption that middle level leaders at other secondary schools shared similar experiences. Consequently, this research examined middle level leadership development practices in New Zealand secondary schools to gain an understanding of: current middle level leadership development practices; the importance of leadership development; the challenges for middle level leaders while performing their role; the leadership development opportunities for middle level leaders; and the provision for middle level leadership development.

The following chapter presents the conclusions of this research, offers recommendations, discusses strengths and limitations of this study and suggests areas for further research. The conclusions which are organised into two sections: A complex role with many challenges and Perceptions of leadership development provision, are presented to reflect the research questions that guided this study:

1. Why is middle leadership development important in New Zealand secondary schools?
2. What are the challenges for middle level leaders in New Zealand secondary schools?
3. What leadership development opportunities for middle level leaders are currently available in New Zealand secondary schools?
4. What do school leaders perceive as important provision for middle level leadership development?

Conclusions

A Complex Role with many Challenges

This research concludes that middle level leaders undertake a pivotal role in New Zealand secondary schools. Middle level leaders play a key role in the centre of the school hierarchy, mediating between senior leaders and their departments. Furthermore, they have responsibility for a variety of key functions which significantly impact on student outcomes. However, middle level leaders' role is fraught with a raft of challenges, many of which they feel powerless to confront.

Curriculum leadership was identified as the main expectation of middle level leaders in this study. It included tasks such as: developing and leading the curriculum within departments; planning learning programmes; maintaining moderation procedures; and meeting NZQA compliance requirements. The role of curriculum leader, undertaken by middle level leaders in this study, is comparative to the role of instructional leader identified in the literature (Bush, 2008; Cardno, 2012; Hallinger, 2003; Poultney, 2007). Although instructional leadership has previously been the domain of principals, in a secondary school context this role is often delegated to middle level leaders. Their position within the school hierarchy means they are ideally located to perform the role of instructional leader within their departments (Brundrett, 2006; Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2006). Although the majority of middle level leaders in this study undertake an instructional leadership role, it is evident that a large proportion of their curriculum responsibilities involve carrying out compliance focused assessment tasks.

In addition to leading the curriculum, middle level leaders in this research are responsible for the development of staff in their departments. This expectation is reiterated by the Ministry of Education (2012a) who state middle level leaders have responsibility for leading staff development. Most middle level leaders in this study implement an informal model of staff development, underpinned by strong collegial relationships similar to the 'informal conversations' described by Robinson et al. (2009). Although middle level leaders in this study assume responsibility for

developing their staff, they perceive that they are not developed, by their senior leaders. This creates a sense of frustration for some middle level leaders and the fact that senior leaders do not share this perception, compounds their frustration even more.

Furthermore, the majority of middle level leaders in this study perform a significant administrative function. Administrative tasks performed by middle level leaders include: maintaining budgets; tracking and recording student achievement; administering moderation systems; and reporting to Boards of Trustees. These tasks create ordered learning environments (Ministry of Education, 2012a) and underpin the activities of teaching and learning (Bush, 2008). The impact of these tasks on the role of middle level leaders is, however, immense (Fitzgerald, 2009). Some middle level leaders in this study perceive their administrative demands encroach upon their teaching role. Moreover, there is a degree of ambiguity around whether middle level leaders' role is primarily that of a leader or a manager. Whilst most middle level leaders in this research emphasised the leadership aspect of their role, in practice their time was dominated with managerial compliance tasks. Therefore, this research concludes that middle level leaders' role is not only an integral one, it is also demanding and complex. The complexities of their role have created a raft of challenges for middle level leaders. The three main challenges identified in this study are: a lack of time; a lack of adequate leadership development; and the tension of leading departments within the wider school context.

A lack of time was overwhelmingly identified as the most significant challenge facing middle level leaders in this study. There was significant congruence between Board of Trustee members, senior leaders and middle level leaders that a lack of allocated non contact time hindered middle level leaders' ability to perform their role effectively. This issue is not unique to middle level leaders in New Zealand secondary schools. Research carried out in Australia (Adey, 2000) and the United Kingdom (Wise & Bennett, 2003) also highlights that the expectations placed on middle level leaders exceed the time allocated to them. This emphasises a further issue for middle level leaders, an increased workload. Middle level leaders are now

expected to act in a variety of new arenas such as organisational policy; monitoring colleagues' performance; and demonstrating accountability. As a result, middle level leaders' role has become more complex and therefore, exacerbated the lack of time experienced by them.   Some middle level leaders in this research expressed concern that due to a lack of time they were forced to complete their leadership and administration tasks during time allocated for planning and preparing lessons. Furthermore, some middle level leaders highlighted a sense of frustration that despite struggling to contend with a lack of time and increased workload, more tasks kept being added to their role.   Whilst trustees and senior leaders concurred that middle level leaders were hindered by a lack of time, they did not acknowledge middle level leaders' increased workload.

A further challenge perceived by a significant number of middle level leaders in this study is a lack of leadership development. Nearly half of the middle level leaders considered that they were not adequately trained to perform their role effectively. This reflects previous research which identified only half of middle level leaders felt that their learning needs were being met (Dinham, 2007). Whist it is often assumed those appointed to middle level leadership already possess the requisite leadership skills (Brown et al., 2002), many middle level leaders in this study did not feel adequately prepared to carry out their role effectively.   However, findings of this research identify that the majority of middle level leaders have participated in at least one form of leadership development including: instructional leadership; monitoring and evaluating staff performance; developing staff; strategic planning; developing a vision; administrative skills; interpersonal skills; and budgeting skills.   Only seven middle level leaders out of 37 claimed to not have participated in any form of leadership development. A conclusion of this research, therefore, is that the majority of middle level leaders in this study do receive a measure of leadership development.   What remains unclear is the degree to which the leadership development middle level leaders receive is meeting their needs.

Some trustees and senior leaders confirmed that leadership development of middle level leaders was an issue due to its accessibility and relevance.   Middle level leaders who receive leadership development which does not meet their needs or is

perceived to be irrelevant, may continue to retain their perception that they are not trained to carry out their role (Harding, 1990). Therefore, despite receiving leadership development, many middle level leaders in this study perceive that they are not adequately trained to carry out their role effectively.

A further challenge with which middle level leaders must contend is leading their department within the wider context of the school. Some middle level leaders in this study articulated the cause of this tension was implementing school wide goals which, in their view, were at odds with the aims of their departments. Moreover, they were critical of senior leaders for setting school wide goals which they perceived were unattainable or contradictory. Middle level leaders felt caught in the invidious position of fulfilling their role as leaders within the school's hierarchy and maintaining loyalty to their department and staff. This tension, created by middle level leaders' dichotomous role as school wide leaders and department heads, has been well documented in previous research (Feist, 2008; Fitzgerald, 2009). In contrast, however, senior leaders in this study were critical of middle level leaders for having too narrow a focus and not looking beyond the needs of their departments. Glover et al. (1999) advocate the need for middle level leaders to engage in leadership development which broadens their leadership perspective and equips them with the skills to assist in school wide change.

Therefore, this research concludes that middle level leaders are faced with a difficult and complex role. Middle level leaders carry out a vital function in the centre of the school hierarchy such as: curriculum leadership; developing staff; and administration of departments. These functions have a significant impact on teaching and learning. However, stemming from middle level leaders' pivotal role is a raft of challenges. In this study, middle level leaders had to contend with a lack of allocated non contact time with which to carry out their leadership and administrative tasks. Furthermore, a significant number of middle level leaders felt that they lacked adequate leadership development to undertake their role effectively. Middle level leaders also faced the tension of leading their department within the wider school context. Whilst it may not be possible to eliminate the challenges faced by middle level leaders, equipping

them with leadership capabilities may ease some of the tensions associated with their role.

Perceptions of Leadership Development Provision

This research reveals a difference of perceptions regarding the provision of leadership development for middle level leaders. This research highlights that most of the middle level leaders have undertaken at least one form of leadership development. These forms of leadership development include: instructional leadership; monitoring and evaluating staff; developing staff; strategic planning; developing a vision; administrative skills; interpersonal skills; and budgeting. However, nearly half of the middle level leaders consider that they are not trained to carry out their role effectively. In comparison, senior leaders contend that leadership development is available but middle level leaders are not utilising it effectively.

Despite the majority of middle level leaders in this research undertaking at least one form of leadership development, nearly half believe that they are not adequately trained to perform their role effectively. The majority of middle level leaders in this study favour a model of leadership development which is ongoing and includes support from a senior colleague. Evident from this study is that whilst this form of leadership development is preferred by middle level leaders and espoused by senior leaders, it is not being enacted. Cardno (2012) advocates the need for professional development to: cater for teachers and managers; meet school wide, team, and individual needs; and be organised as a planned and cohesive programme. Although the majority of middle level leaders in this research have undertaken some forms of leadership development, a significant number perceive that it is not meeting their needs. As a result, this research concludes that whilst most middle level leaders in this study do receive leadership development, it may not be addressing their professional learning needs.

Furthermore, two significant gaps were identified in the provision of leadership development for middle level leaders. Firstly, evidence from this study highlights a lack of recognition of the role tertiary institutions can play in the leadership development of middle level leaders. Post graduate leadership and management development programmes offered by tertiary institutions were notable only by their absence from the findings of this study. Although respondents identified short term middle level leadership development courses facilitated by external providers as desirable, they did not identify longer term post graduate leadership programmes. Evidence indicates that formal post graduate leadership and management programmes do not appear to be a priority for the middle level leaders in this study. The majority of Board of Trustee members, senior leaders and middle level leaders in this study tend to recognise leadership development that is delivered within a school context. Only very few respondents, from any level, identified participation in post graduate leadership and management programmes. Secondly, whilst professional development opportunities are provided at national level for principals and those who aspire to become principals (Ministry of Education, 2012b), there is currently no provision for the leadership development of middle level leaders at national level. The Ministry of Education's (2012a) 'Leading from the Middle' offers a model for middle level leadership in New Zealand schools which acknowledges the complex role of middle level leaders and outlines some of their tasks. However, only one case study that focuses on a middle level leader is provided. Moreover, 'Leading from the Middle' does not suggest how middle level leaders may develop leadership capabilities or propose how they should deal with the complex set of challenges stemming from their role.

Therefore, this research concludes that whilst most middle level leaders receive some leadership development to carry out their role, the training they receive often does not meet their professional learning needs. Furthermore, there is a lack of emphasis placed on post graduate leadership programmes by members of Boards of Trustees, senior leaders and middle level leaders. The overwhelming majority of Board of Trustee members, senior leaders and middle level leaders advocate a model of leadership development which is ongoing, school based and includes support from a senior colleague. Finally, there is no provision for the leadership

development of middle level leaders at a national level despite the recognition of the significant contribution of middle level leaders towards teaching and learning in New Zealand secondary schools.

Recommendations

Drawing on the conclusions of this research, several recommendations are proposed. Recommendations are proposed at the national level and at school level.

National Level

It is a recommendation of this research that the Ministry of Education implement a national programme of leadership development for middle level leaders. The complexity of middle level leaders' role demands a set of leadership and management skills which requires specialised knowledge and training (Cardno, 2012). Qualification for the role of classroom teacher is no longer adequate for the role of leader (Bush, 2008). The Ministry of Education (2012a), in their model of middle leadership 'Leading from the Middle' state middle level leaders have responsibility for leadership functions including: leading pedagogical change; providing leadership that is responsive to student identity, culture and language; liaising with the community; providing an orderly school environment; developing staff; and building relationships. This research highlights perceptions that many middle level leaders are not adequately trained to carry out these tasks effectively. In addition, there is currently no national provision for equipping middle level leaders with the skills they require to meet the demands of their leadership role.

It is essential that members of Boards of Trustees, senior leaders and middle level leaders have a clear understanding of middle level leadership. This research recommends that the development of a national leadership development programme for middle level leaders should be developed in conjunction with senior school leaders, middle level leaders, and tertiary institutions. Furthermore, it is recommended that such a leadership development programme include: an

understanding of middle level leadership; the opportunity for middle level leaders to reframe their perspectives using higher order thinking and linking theory to practice (Cardno & Fitzgerald, 2005); and support, the provision of a mentor or coach (Cardno & Fitzgerald, 2005; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009). It is strongly recommended that any national leadership development programme designed to equip middle level leaders with appropriate leadership skills and knowledge would make use of post graduate leadership and management programmes. Considering the pivotal role of middle level leaders in the hierarchy of decentralised schools, it is imperative that provision of leadership development for middle level leaders is made available at national level.

School Level

It is a recommendation of this research that school leaders increase their understanding of leadership development. This research reveals that whilst the majority of middle level leaders receive some measure of leadership development, a significant number of them perceive that they are not adequately trained to carry out their role. This view is not shared by members of Boards of Trustees or senior leaders in this study which highlights a conflict of perspectives with middle level leaders. If middle level leaders are provided with leadership development which is contrary to their needs or their view of leadership development, they may retain their perception that they are not adequately developed. Therefore, it is essential members of Boards of Trustees, senior leaders and middle level leaders have a shared understanding of what constitutes effective, relevant leadership development.

This research strongly recommends that senior leaders implement formal, planned leadership development programmes for middle level leaders. Rhodes and Brundrett (2009) place responsibility for the identification and development of leadership capabilities in the hands of principals. This study highlights the leadership development received by middle level leaders may not be addressing their professional learning requirements. Furthermore, evidence from this study indicates ongoing leadership development for middle level leaders in which they are

supported by more experienced colleagues, is not being practiced. The predominant model of leadership development for middle level leaders is learning on the job which is an unsuitable and untenable method of leadership development (Adey, 2000). Middle level leaders require a model of leadership development which identifies their professional learning needs, provides them with opportunities to develop their leadership practice and offers them a supportive environment in which to learn. Equipping middle level leaders with appropriate leadership skills and knowledge is critical if they are to positively influence teaching and learning.

A further recommendation of this research is that senior and middle level leaders work collaboratively to rationalise the role of middle level leaders. Evidence from this study highlights that the demands placed on middle level leaders may be hindering them from carrying out their role effectively. As a consequence, middle level leaders are often forced to complete administrative tasks in time set aside for lesson preparation or during class time. This research recommends that senior and middle level leaders prioritise the tasks allocated to middle level leaders in order to reduce the level of compliance driven administrative functions and emphasise leadership tasks which focus on teaching and learning.

Strengths and Limitations of this Study

A strength of this research is that it gained the perspectives of members of Boards of Trustees, senior leaders and middle level leaders. An electronic questionnaire was used to survey 60 respondents from five New Zealand secondary schools. Obtaining multiple points of view provided a wide variety of perspectives, allowed data to be triangulated and therefore, provided findings which are valid and transferable to other school settings.

A limitation of this study is whilst it identifies forms of leadership development undertaken by middle level leaders, it does not identify the means by which leadership development is delivered. Consequently, inferences had to be drawn

from the open ended questions obtained from respondents. Although this does not invalidate the findings of this study, it does mean there is a limited degree of conjecture regarding the delivery of leadership development for middle level leaders.

Areas for Further Research

This research has focused on the leadership development of middle level leaders in New Zealand secondary schools from the perspectives of members of Boards of Trustees, senior leaders and middle level leaders. This research has highlighted a conflict between senior leader and middle level leader perceptions regarding the leadership development of middle level leaders. It may be that this conflict of viewpoints stems from middle level leaders' understanding of leadership development. Further research investigating middle level leaders' understanding of leadership development may add to a more informed debate regarding leadership development of middle level leaders. This research proposes that leadership development equips middle level leaders with the skills to enable them to carry out their role more effectively. Further research that would benefit this topic is a case study investigating the effects of leadership development for middle level leaders in New Zealand secondary schools. In addition, further research could be carried out to investigate the effect post graduate leadership and management programmes have on middle level leaders performing their leadership role.

Developing Middle Leaders in New Zealand Secondary Schools

My name is Martin Bassett and I am currently enrolled in the Master of Educational Leadership and Management degree 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 aim of my project is to examine middle leadership development practices in New Zealand secondary schools to gain an understanding of current middle leadership development practices. I intend to examine the expectations and responsibilities placed on middle leaders, in particular, the challenges associated with the middle leadership role and middle leaders views about ways in which middle leadership development could contribute to the leadership practices of middle level leaders in New Zealand secondary schools.

I will be collecting data using an electronic questionnaire. Participation in this questionnaire is entirely voluntary. The data will only be used in my thesis in which neither you nor your organisation will be identified. This questionnaire will take no more than 10 minutes to complete. 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 Yours sincerely Martin Bassett m.bassett72@gmail.com UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2012-1070 This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from 25/07/2012 to 25/07/2013. 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.

Section One

Please indicate your role in your school

- ○ Board of Trustee member
- ○ Senior Leader
- ○ Middle Level Leader

How many years' experience have you had in your current role?

- ☐ 1 - 3 years
- ☐ 4 - 6 years
- ☐ more than 6 years

How many years leadership experience have you had in New Zealand secondary schools?

- ☐ 1 - 3 years
- ☐ 4 - 6 years
- ☐ more than 6 years

Please indicate your gender

- ○ Female
- ○ Male

Section Two

The following areas of leadership development are currently offered to middle level leaders in my school: * Please tick appropriate boxes

- ☐ Instructional leadership (leading the improvement of teaching and learning)
- ☐ Budgeting skills
- ☐ Interpersonal skills
- ☐ Administrative skills
- ☐ Strategic planning
- ☐ Monitoring and evaluation of staff performance
- ☐ Developing staff
- ☐ Developing a vision
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other: [   ]

I have undertaken the following areas of leadership development at my school: * Please tick appropriate boxes

- ☐ Instructional leadership (leading the improvement of teaching and learning)
- ☐ Budgeting skills
- ☐ Interpersonal skills
- ☐ Administrative skills
- ☐ Strategic planning
- ☐ Monitoring and evaluation of staff performance
- ☐ Developing staff
- ☐ Developing a vision
- ☐ None

- ☐ Other: [　　　　]

The following areas of leadership development would be of use to middle level leaders in my school: * Please tick appropriate boxes

- ☐ Instructional leadership (leading the improvement of teaching and learning)
- ☐ Budgeting skills
- ☐ Interpersonal skills
- ☐ Administrative skills
- ☐ Strategic planning
- ☐ Monitoring and evaluation of staff performance
- ☐ Developing staff
- ☐ Developing a vision
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other: [　　　　]

Section Three

Please rate your perception of each statement. 1 = Strongly Disagree and 6 = Strongly Agree.

Leadership development of middle level leaders is considered important in my school

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly Agree

Leadership development should be a priority for middle level leaders in my school

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly Agree

Middle level leaders in my school are trained to carry out their role effectively

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Strongly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly Agree

Section Four

What are the main expectations of middle level leaders in your school?

What are the challenges experienced by middle level leaders in your school?

What is your understanding of leadership development?

How is leadership development for middle level leaders reflected in your school's policy documentation?

What leadership development opportunities could better equip middle leaders in your school to meet the challenges they may face?
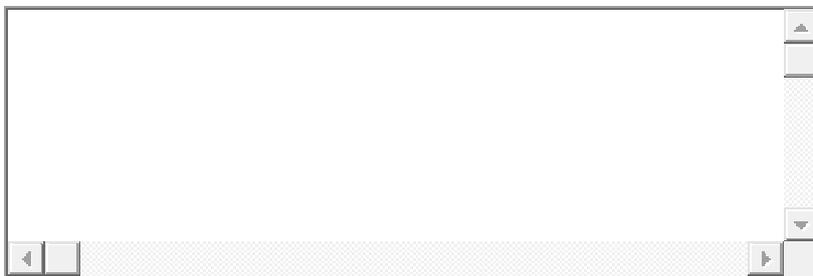
Further comments
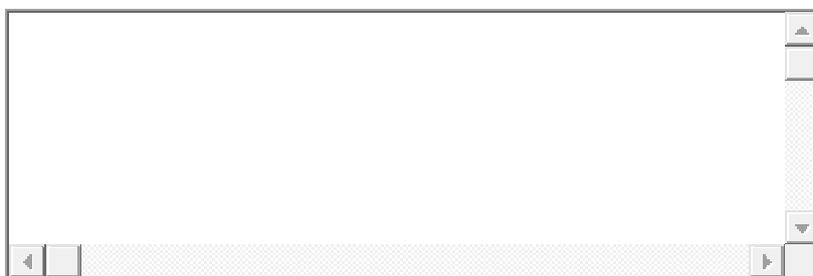
Thank you for your time

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