Exploring the Nature of Leadership Development of Middle Level Professional Leaders in New Zealand Polytechnics

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

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This Thesis entitled: Exploring the Nature of Leadership Development of Middle Level Professional Leaders in New Zealand Polytechnics is submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the Unitec degree of Master of Educational Leadership and Management.

Candidate’s declaration

I confirm that:

- This Thesis represents my own work;
- The contribution of supervisors and others to this work was consistent with the Unitec Regulations and Policies.
- Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.

Research Ethics Committee Approval Number: 2015-1067

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Date: 30th November 2016

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ABSTRACT
Despite the global popularity of leadership development there is an absence of literature on leadership development of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics. This is in spite of research that suggests that the quality of leaders and leadership are crucial to producing enhanced learning outcomes for students. While most studies on leadership development in higher education have been focussed on academic leadership, literature available on leadership development of middle level professional leaders in higher education has tended to focus on middle management within the business, management and human resource literature. Hence, there is a gap in the literature regarding these non-academic middle leaders.

A qualitative approach was adopted within a constructivist paradigm to explore the concept of leadership development, investigate institutional commitments and examine leadership development practices and experiences of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics. Semi-structured interviews created the opportunity to hear the experiences and perceptions of six middle level professional leaders and three human resource managers on leadership development within the New Zealand polytechnics they work in.

The findings revealed that the role of middle level professional leaders can be split into two categories: responsibilities related to people and responsibilities related to expertise. The findings also indicate that there is confusion in the use of the terms leader development and leadership development. The findings highlighted that there is a disparity between what middle level professional leaders want in terms of leadership development and what the institution offers. In addition, leadership development is not planned and is self-driven and highlights the importance of effective performance appraisals and professional development planning. A conclusion of the study relates to the importance of nurturing aspiring and emergent leaders within the institution. It is apparent that existing leadership development opportunities provided are inadequate, underfunded and are not preparing these middle level professional leaders with the skills and knowledge they need. An implication for practice is the need for a leadership development programme that is tailor-made and supportive of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics.
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<td>Association for Tertiary Education Managers</td>
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<td>CoE</td>
<td>Colleges of Education</td>
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<td>HEI</td>
<td>Higher Education Institutions</td>
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<td>ITP</td>
<td>Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics</td>
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<td>LD</td>
<td>Leadership development</td>
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<td>NPM</td>
<td>New Public Management</td>
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<td>NZQA</td>
<td>New Zealand Qualifications Authority</td>
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<td>OTEP</td>
<td>Other Training Education Providers</td>
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a background and overview of the higher education context in which this study takes place, the rationale for this research, the research aims, the research questions, and the organisation of the chapters.

Context
Many countries have recognised education as a key contributor to national capital and economic advancement, and New Zealand is no exception. New Zealand is a Pacific island country with an estimated population of just over 4.6 million (Statistics New Zealand, n.d.). A brief historical view of the education sector in New Zealand reveals a wave of reforms over the last three decades. The late 1980s reveals an era that was part of an extensive economic and public service reform agenda that was initiated by the then Labour government (Crawford, 2016; Howse, 2006; Abott & Doucouliagos, 2003; Openshaw, 2009; O’Neill, 2010).

New Zealand’s education system is made up of three levels; early childhood education, primary and secondary schools and tertiary education organisations (TEO) (Ministry of Education, n.d). The TEO sector includes public tertiary education institutions (TEIs) or higher education institutions (HEIs), private training establishments (PTEs), other tertiary education providers (OTEPs), industry training organisations (ITOs), and adult and community education (ACE) providers. Additionally, a range of workplace training and industry-related education takes place (Crawford, 2016). TEIs or HEIs are additionally split into universities, institutes of technology and polytechnics (ITP), colleges of education (CoE), and Wānanga (Māori education), each which have roles prescribed in the New Zealand Education Act 1989. This study is in the higher education context of the New Zealand ITP sector.

During the era of reforms in the higher education sector, the Report of the Working Group on Post-Compulsory Education and Training (1988), known as the Hawke Report, recognised that New Zealand’s post compulsory education and training
system (PCET) “could contribute more to both economic efficiency and social equity” (p.6). PCET was defined by the Hawke Report (1988) as “the plural curricula experienced by persons over the age of 15 and include all state and independent institutions providing formal education and training arrangements for informal, on the job education and training provided by enterprises and other organisations for their employees” (section 1.1). The Hawke Report proposed several changes which were intended to aid in the achievement of economic efficiency and social equity in the higher education sector. Two of the changes proposed by the Hawke Report (1988) and implemented by the then government were the abolishment of the Department of Education and the establishment of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA).

NZQA is responsible for the quality assurance of non-university tertiary training providers and under the authority of non-university tertiary training providers are ITPs. ITPs are legal entities that can have the “rights, powers and privileges of a natural person” (section 192-1, Education Act, 1989) and are governed by a council (section 165, Education Act 1989). According to NZQA, the definition of an ITP is one that “delivers technical, vocational and professional education. They also promote research, particularly applied and technological research that aids development” (n.d., p.1). The passing of the Education Amendment Act in 1990 allowed ITPs to operate independently and to diversify the programmes they had to offer.

Today, there are sixteen polytechnics in New Zealand (NZQA, n.d.). Many of these polytechnics offer undergraduate and post graduate level programmes. While varying topics have been researched in the New Zealand polytechnic context (such as; Cardno, 2014; Cardno, 2013; Abbott & Doucoulagos, 2004; Richardson, 2008; Marshall, 2012 & 2015; Dale, 2010), there is currently no literature specific to the nature of leadership development of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics.
Within the New Zealand higher education sector, the term ‘professional staff’ has been assigned to those who are not on an academic contract (Gordon & Whitchurch, 2007; Whitchurch, 2008; Sebalji, Holbrook & Bourke, 2012; Whitchurch, Skinner & Lauwerys, 2009) and ‘middle level leaders’ have been identified as those having delegated administrative and managerial responsibility (Szekeres, 2011; Szekeres, 2006; Branson, Franken and Penny, 2015). For the purpose of this study, I have coined the term ‘middle level professional leader’ to reflect “those below the small group of top strategic managers and above first-level supervision” (Dopson, Risk & Stewart, 1992, p.40) who are not on an academic contract in the New Zealand polytechnic context. These middle level professional leaders have responsibility for leading and managing staff who provide support services (such as; student services, information technology, library services, pastoral care, finance, human resources, estates, enterprise and external relations) to academic staff and students (Clegg & McAuley; 2005, Conway & Dobson, 2003; Thomas-Gregory, 2014; Vilkinas, 2014; Whitchurch, 2004).

Research Rationale
Despite the global popularity of the topic of leadership development, there is an absence of literature on leadership development of middle level professional leaders in the higher education system (and more so in the New Zealand ITP sector). This is in spite of research (for example; Bush, 2010; Bush, 2008; Cardno, 2012; Van Velsor & McCauley, 2004; Muijs, Harris, Lumby, Morrison & Sood, 2006) which suggests that the quality of leaders and leadership are crucial to producing enhanced learning outcomes for the individual.

Whilst literature (such as; Graham, 2013; Rosser, 2004; Johnsrud, Heck and Rosser, 2000; Jackson and Kile, 2004; Conway & Dobson, 2003; Whitchurch, 2004; Vilkinas, 2014; Kalargyrou, Pescosolido & Kalagiros, 2012) suggests that professional staff play a vital role in enhancing student learning outcomes in higher education, this is a recent phenomenon. Welsh and Metcalf (2003), Conway and Dobson (2003), and McMaster (2002 & 2014) claim that whatever research is done around professional staff, has been scarce and the focus has been on differences (and tensions)
between academic and professional staff and on faculty perceptions of the value of professional staff. Braun, Nazlic, Weisweiler, Pawlowska, Peus and Frey (2009) echo the claims made by Blackwell and Blackmore (2003) that leadership development of non-academic managers in higher education continues to be an under-researched field.

A survey conducted by Aon Hewitt (2012) on the human resource effectiveness in more than 80 higher learning institutions in the United States of America (USA) explains how one university, Emory University, developed a multi-layered leadership development program that targeted staff at every level (not just academics) with a focus on developing good leaders and strengthening capabilities. Emory University has an 80% retention rate of leaders and credit is given to the success of this multi-layered leadership development program.

Middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics play a heterogeneous and vital role. Various studies (for example: Bryman, 2007; Cardno, 2014; Brown, 2001, Ramsden, 1998) confirm that effective leadership is vital in all organisations and Inman (2009) adds that “educational organisations are no exceptions” (p.418). In addition to managing staff, Vilkinas (2014), in her study on non-academic middle level managers in higher education, argues that “middle-level managers in the higher education sector are like any other middle-level managers in private and public sector organisations: they focus on ‘department’ governance, programme management, human resource management, budget and resources, external communication and office management” (p.321). Vilkinas (2014) suggests that these middle level professional leaders are responsible for connecting different areas within an educational institution. Vilkinas (2014) boldly states that middle level professional leaders “enable academics to do their job” (p.321). Inman (2009) stresses that it is vital that educational institutions consider how leaders learn and develop for educational institutions to benefit from effective leaders.

Staff learning and development are part of a pool of strategic responsibilities under the scope of human resource management in higher education institutions (Aon
Hewitt, 2012). The study conducted by Aon Hewitt in 2012 revealed that improving leadership development was one of the key strategic priorities for human resource leaders. Aon Hewitt maintains that “higher education is about people” (p. 6) and the achievement of people goal and objectives depend largely on the human resources department.

I embarked on this research because of my experiences of working in the New Zealand polytechnic sector for almost a decade and my interest in leadership development. In those ten years, I experienced varying degrees of leadership development opportunities in various roles as a ‘professional leader’ and as an ‘academic leader’. In my leadership and management classes, I was one of two students in my cohort from the ‘professional’ services area.

While most studies on leadership development have been focussed on academic leadership (see for example; Pepper & Giles, 2015; Gunter, 2001; Drago-Severson, 2012; Ramsden, 1998; Cardno, 2012; Van Velsor & McCauley, 2004), literature that has reported on leadership development of middle level professional leaders in higher education has tended to focus on middle management within the business, management and human resource literature base (for example; Gordon & Whitchurch, 2007; Blackwell & Blackmore, 2003; Clegg and McAuley, 2005; Bush, 2010; Rudman, 2002; Ramsden, 1998). Juntrasook, Nairn, Bond and Spronken-Smith (2013) add strength to these claims when they state that “the focus of leadership studies in higher education has predominantly associated with formal headship” (p.202). The notion of headship in the literature has been predominantly linked to those in academic leadership positions such as principals, heads of schools, and heads of departments.

As there is a large gap in the literature on leadership development of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics, this study aims to add to the knowledge base of this topic.
Research Aims
The aims of this study are:

- To explore the concept of leadership development in New Zealand polytechnics;
- To investigate institutional commitments to developing middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics; and
- To examine leadership development practices and experiences of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics.

Research Questions
1. What is the nature of leadership development in New Zealand polytechnics?
2. What are the institutional commitments to developing middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics?
3. What are the leadership development practices and experiences of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics?

Organisation of Thesis
This thesis is organised into five chapters.

Chapter One, Introduction, presents an overview of this study, a rationale that justifies the study and an outline of the aims and questions.

Chapter Two, Literature Review, critically reviews the literature which is linked to this study and the research questions. It also examines the context of higher education in which this study takes place.

Chapter Three, Methodology, provides a rationale and justification for the adoption of a qualitative methodology for data collection and analysis for this study. The chapter describes the qualitative interview method employed; identifies and addresses the participant choice and sampling methods; explains data management procedures and details of data analysis. Validity and ethical issues relevant to the research are also discussed.
Chapter Four, *Findings*, presents a summary of the data collected from semi-structured interviews with six middle level professional leaders and three human resource/organisational development managers from New Zealand polytechnics.

Chapter Five, *Discussion of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations*, discusses the key findings identified in Chapter Four by linking them to the literature presented in Chapter Two. This chapter also completes the thesis with the presentation of key conclusions of the study, possible limitations of the study and final recommendations with regards to practice and further research.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction
In this chapter, the literature on leadership development and non-academic staff in higher education has been critically reviewed. As literature on leadership development of non-academic staff in New Zealand polytechnics seems to be sparse, literature from the management and other sectors within the New Zealand higher education system has also been explored.

Several themes have emerged from the literature that have been discussed under the following headings: educational leadership; human resource management; performance appraisal; professional development; roles of middle level professional leaders; challenges faced by middle level professional leaders; and understanding leadership development. These themes are relevant to this study as they assist in understanding the nature of leadership development, institutional commitments to leadership development and experiences and practices of leadership development of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics.

Educational leadership
Educational leadership as a concept has been given many names. Several different terminologies (such as: professional leadership, pedagogical leadership, academic leadership, instructional leadership, curriculum leadership, instructional leadership, curriculum leadership, curriculum management, programme leadership, learning-centred leadership and leadership of learning) have been associated with the concept of educational leadership in different countries. In Northern America for example, the term used was educational administration whereas in England the term used was educational management (Cardno, 2012). Whatever term is associated with educational leadership today, literature on educational leadership such as from Bush (2011), Cardno (2012), Yukl (2002) and Gunter (2004), supports the stance that there is no one correct term or meaning to associate with educational leadership. The term educational leadership itself has evolved due to its popularity in the mid-1990s (Cardno, 2012) and is relevant to understanding the nature of
leadership development of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics.

According to Cardno (2012), in the absence of literature and research in the discipline of educational leadership, educational leadership borrowed a lot of its concepts and ideas from the management discipline. Bush (2011) adds that leadership is about influencing and management is about implementing actions. Literature around educational leadership is not consistent with the use of management or leadership, some writers argue for the separation of management and leadership and some argue for the fusion of these two terms. Bolman and Deal (2008) point out that although the terms leadership and management can be confused with each other, the terms leadership and management in educational leadership cannot be separated. In an educational organisation, leadership is a process of influencing and management is the activities used to carry out leadership. Cardno (2012) claims that management is essential for leadership in an educational setting and for management to be effective, there must be leadership. Bolman and Deal (2008) support this view by stating that although leadership and management are two different disciplines, they are both vital. Bolam (1999) uses the term educational management and claims it is an executive function carrying out agreed policy.

Broadly viewed, leadership involves looking at leadership of all organisational functions regarding the organisation’s vision and goals. This view is reinforced by Bush (2011), Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd (2009) and Weber (1987), who claim that educational leadership is concerned with educational purpose and vision and setting goals in an organisation is vital. In addition, Waters, Marzano and McNulty (2004) and the Wallace Foundation study (2012) all have the setting of goals as the common factor in educational leadership. This broad view has a strong connection to transformational leadership as identified in the literature by Bass and Avolio (1994).
Educational leadership viewed broadly is not immune to problems. This is echoed by Bolam (1999) who states that although organisations can gain from good visions, there are deficiencies in its effectiveness. Viewed narrowly, leadership is focussed on learning instructional programmes. This view is maintained by theorists Elmore (2004), Weber (1987) and Starratt (2003). These theorists state that in a narrow view of educational leadership, the principal, head teacher, head of department or those in charge of leading an educational organisation are the sole instructional leaders and the focus is on quality teaching. In these theorists’ claims, no reference is made to non-academic staff within the education system who may also be leaders which highlights the relevance of this study.

Bush (2011) claims that leadership is about influencing others. His views are strengthened by Robinson et al. (2009,) who in their Best Synthesis Evidence (BES) study described leadership as a process of influencing. Furthermore, Bolman and Deal (2008) reinforce this view by claiming that educational leadership is a process of mutual influence fusing thought, feeling and action. Seashore, Leithwood, Wahlstrom and Anderson (2010) identify the setting of a tone and developing a vision as vital to enhancing achievement.

The claims by Seashore et al. (2010) are echoed by Robinson et al. (2009) who state that “this influence can be direct, as when leaders interact with others, or indirect, as when they change the conditions in which people work” (p.36). Elkin (2008) outlines leadership as “a process of influencing others to achieve task-related goals which can be achieved directly or indirectly and as a shared responsibility” (p.197). In the context of higher education, Ramsden (1998) provides a contrasting view by linking educational leadership to ‘academic business’ (p. 123). Ramsden (1998) adds that external elements affect the environment in which higher education institutions operate and emphasises that leadership in higher education is very comprehensive and covers the elements of leadership, management and leadership levels at various levels within the institution.
The definitions provided on educational leadership (above) largely focus on academics as leaders. A study conducted by Bryman (2007) on leader behaviour defines leadership in higher education as “influencing and/or motivating others towards the accomplishment of departmental goals” (p.696). Bryman’s (2007) view is also concentrated on academics as leaders. In contrast, a study conducted by Vilkinas (2014) that concentrated on the leadership of non-academic managers in higher education stated that these non-academic middle managers held a “responsibility to lead their area in the direction of the strategic goals for their organisation” (p. 321). Vilkinas’ (2014) definition is similar to those who have defined educational leadership regarding academics, in the sense that she too has defined leadership as one that is influential in the strategic goals of the organisation. Vilkinas (2014) also highlighted three important issues that previous studies on middle managers in higher education institutions have failed to do; (1) failure to link their findings to leadership effectiveness; (2) failure to include others’ perceptions, such as line managers, peers and staff; and (3) failure to identify the importance of the various leadership behaviours: that is, they do not establish the ‘benchmarks’ of expected behaviours displayed by survey respondents.

The definitions of educational leadership by several authors (such as Gordon & Whitchurch, 2007; Blackwell & Blackmore, 2003; Clegg and McAuley, 2005; Bush, 2010; Rudman, 2002; Ramsden, 1998) demonstrate that while there may be harmonies within the definitions, the majority of the literature on leadership is academic in nature and none of these definitions refer to non-academics as leaders within New Zealand polytechnics and is therefore another reason for the importance of this study.

**Human resource management**
Understanding the role of human resource management in higher education is vital in the journey of exploring the nature of leadership development and institutional commitments to developing middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics because human resource management is largely responsible for the
leadership development in HEIs (Holbeche, 2008; Hall, 2009; Arslan et al. 2013; Menon, 2015). Literature (such as; Rudman, 2002; and Macky & Johnson, 2003) on human resource management claims that the terms ‘human resource management’ have evolved from the terms ‘personnel management’. The origins of human resource management according to Rudman (2002) can be traced back to the mid-1950s. Authors such as Rudman (2002), Macky and Johnson (2003) and Gordon and Whitchurch (2007) have defined personnel management to describe the tasks associated with overseeing policies and procedures for training, salaries, and other procedures for employees and employers. All educational institutions have to participate in personnel management; from the time they employ a new staff member up until the time the staff member leaves. Rudman (2002) and Macky and Johnson (2003) also argue that personnel management serves the needs of both the employer and the employee. They claim that the reason for the change in name (and focus) from personnel management to human resource management has been due to organisations needing to respond to change in the environment and gain competitive advantage. Personnel management is functional and the discussion on human resource management that follows identifies it as being strategic.

Literature on human resource management such as from Cardno (2012), Rudman (2002), and Sarip and Royo (2014) claim that the focus of human resource management is strategic. Rudman (2002) defines human resource management as “covers all the concepts, strategies, policies and practices which organisations use to manage and develop the people who work for them” (p.22). This view is supported by Arslan, Akdemir and Karsli (2013) who in their study on how human resource operations work in higher education in Turkey advocate that human resource management “performs a key role in achieving organizational vision and purpose and sustaining and maintaining competitive advantage” (p.744). This indicates that to understand human resource management, one must begin to look at the bigger picture at the organisational level (for example, organisational policies). This is looking at it strategically.
Macky and Johnson (2003) define human resource management as “value laden and culturally bound, all processes and activities aimed at utilising all employees to achieve organisational ends” (p.3). They highlight the importance of relationship(s) between people and the organisation. Mercer, Barker and Bird (2010) add to Rudman (2002) and Macky and Johnson’s (2003) views to human resource management when they define it as a broad and strategic approach to staff management in organisation integrating strategic vision with day-to-day operations. Cardno (2012) reiterates that to achieve organisational strategy one must have the appropriate human resources. Her views on human resource management is similar to that of Rudman (2002), Macky and Johnson (2003), and Mercer et al. (2010). Bolman and Deal (2008) have identified the human resource frame as one of the four frames that needs to be considered when looking at organisational issues. Bolman and Deal (2008) argue that without people, human resource management doesn’t exist when they state “our most important asset is our people” (p.117). They emphasise that human resource management is about valuing people.

Aon Hewitt (2012) in its study of human resource effectiveness in over 80 higher education institutions emphasised that “the strategic priorities for human resource leaders are related to people” (p.6) and the development of people falls under the scope of human resource management. Cardno (2012) claims that human resource management is a chance to connect the organisation’s goals, staff development and systems that support the focus in education, that is, to enhance learning and teaching. Where personnel management is functional (Rudman, 2002; Macky & Johnson, 2003) and human resource management is strategic (Cardno, 2012; Arslan et al. 2013) both must be used together to manage and develop staff in any organisation. Because human resource management is strategic and focuses on the organisation and its long-term goals, Cardno (2012) highlights that these goals can be achieved with the appropriate people. Line managers enforce the operation whereas those employed under the scope of human resource management provide strategic advice to the organisation’s leadership team. This means there should be a connection between the organisation’s strategic plans and every employee’s performance appraisal and professional (and leadership) development plans. Bolman and Deal (2008) claim that people should be an investment and an asset, as
capable of developing and being committed to working together in teams to take the organisation to pre-determined levels of success.

Since human resource management is about dealing with people, human resource management has to be pro-active and future oriented, hence strategic because it requires planning. This view is supported by authors such as Cardno (2012), Rudman (2002) and Macky and Johnson (2003). A strategic framework provides a frame for all interconnected activity related to managing people. Rudman (2002) introduces the notion of mutuality of interests between employee and employer. Rudman (2002) maintains that integration and fit are vital in the human resource management framework and practices. While human resource management is about day-to-day operations it cannot be effective unless it is viewed together with strategic planning and organisational and individual needs. Strategic activity is conducted at the top level. At the higher education level, human resource management is the responsibility of institutional management.

Oldroyd (2005) introduces two dimensions of human resource management as being ‘hard’ and ‘soft’. He claims that both dimensions should be present in educational organisations. According to Oldroyd (2005):

> the content of the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ human resource management dimensions differs mainly because the former emphasises performance for the sake of the organisation, whereas the latter focuses on individuals and persons as well as in their role as productive workers. (p.197).

Authors such as Rudman (2002) and Macky and Johnson (2003) also believe that an effective approach to human resource management needs to include the best of the hard and soft models. The ‘hard’ approach is focused on achieving the task and ‘soft’ approach is about motivating those who perform the tasks which mean that for human resource management to be effective, organisation and individual goals need to be aligned to enhance organisational success. Human resource management
therefore plays an important role in supporting a culture of learning, reflection and improvement for middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics.

**Performance appraisal**
To align individual and organisational goals, performance appraisal has emerged as an important theme because performance appraisal is not a stand-alone process and is part of the process of professional development leading to leadership development. Performance appraisal is also vital in understanding the institutional commitments to leadership development. The era of reform in higher education in New Zealand has also been called the era of quality and accountability (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2011). Brundrett and Rhodes (2011) claim that the reform of the education sector was a way to implement an accountability system at an organisational level and at individual level (for example, introducing performance appraisals). Hence the popularity of performance appraisals in the education sector in New Zealand.

In the education context, performance appraisal has been defined as an “evaluative activity that involves making qualitative judgements about performance, once competency is established. It is also concerned simultaneously with improving the quality of that performance” (Pigott-Irvine & Cardno, 2005, p.15). In the management literature, performance appraisal is embedded in a performance management system and is a strategic approach towards the achievement of human resource management activities (Rudman, 2002). Literature on the purpose(s) of performance appraisals, such as from Middlewood and Cardno (2001) and Razik and Swanson (2001) indicates that there are multi-level purposes of performance appraisals.

Middlewood and Cardno (2001) state that “the multi-level purposes are related to accountability and development at the level of the education system, the organisation, and the individual at both a professional and personal level (p.6). Razik and Swanson (2001) identify four purposes of evaluation: (1) individual improvement,
(2) education improvement, (3) individual accountability, and (4) organisational accountability. These authors have identified two elements in common for the purpose of performance appraisals: (1) development (organisational and individual) and (2) accountability. Although these authors have identified the purpose(s) of performance appraisals, the discourse is centred on academic staff and what the literature is missing is discourse around non-academic staff in higher education.

In a study conducted by Analoui and Fell (2002) on performance appraisal in a university in the United Kingdom (UK) with administrative staff in four departments, Analoui and Fell (2002) define performance appraisal as constituting a “continual cyclical process of determining performance expectations, supporting performance reviewing and appraising performance and, finally, managing performance standards” (p. 280). Analoui and Fell’s (2002) study found that a lack of provision for formal appraisal led to little or no dialogue about staff performance, expectations, goals and career development. A lack of dialogue about staff performance, expectations, goals and career development can lead to little or no identification of professional development planning which means there will be little or no leadership development planning.

According to Cardno (2012), performance appraisal should be a developmental and on-going process and forms one part of a performance management system. Cardno (2012) says that performance appraisal is “a comprehensive and complex process involving multiple purposes of activities that are integrated to benefit both organization and individual” (p. 93). Cardno (2012) describes performance management as a process, a cycle that usually covers a year. It covers all human activity. It covers the time from when an employee starts in an organisation to the time a person leaves. Cardno’s (2012) views are similar to the views expressed earlier by Analoui and Fell (2002).

Within the leadership development scope, Hall (2009) in her study of human resource management in UK universities argues that:
a crucial medium and long term issue concerning performance management is planning for succession management, as the failure to identify, develop and retain quality leaders has a direct impact on institutional success. At its best, succession management produces a continuous stream of potential leaders - the so-called 'talent pipeline'. (p.23).

Hall (2009) explains that sectors (for example, businesses) outside of higher education do not leave succession planning to chance however her study found that there is a reluctance on the part of higher education institutions in the UK to participate in the development of its leaders. Cardno (2012) suggests that educational leaders can influence the direction and effectiveness of an organisation if they focus their activities on solving problems that act as barriers to improving student achievement. She adds that when leaders make performance appraisal a priority, this is likely to have an impact on student learning. While performance appraisal in theory is a planned and on-going activity, the reality is that performance appraisal is conducted ad hoc. Where individual goals should be linked to the organisation’s goals to ensure appropriate planning takes place for it to be strategic, the reality is that performance appraisals are conducted unplanned or as a tick-box exercise. Piggot-Irvin and Cardno (2015) remind us that for appraisal to be an effective form of evaluation, it should encompass both its developmental (formative) and accountability (summative) aspects.

Cardno (2012) captures the essence of an effective performance appraisal succinctly when she states that:

an effective appraisal system gains staff commitment and is valued. It allows colleagues to engage in dialogue that leads to learning and change, and is the pivot for mounting a professional development programme that can meet the needs of individuals, teams and the whole school. This is achieved when appraisal activity generates information and insights that guide decision-making about professional development. Leaders, who are expected to nurture and communicate the
vision and long-term plans, should be able to reply on appraisal information to judge the capacity of the organisation to achieve these. (p.103).

Cardno (2012) also adds that performance appraisal is meaningless if it does not achieve four things: (1) provide honest and objective feedback, (2) make dialogue about improvement possible, (3) identify professional development needs and, (4) bring about agreed and desired change. In addition, Forrester (2011) states that:

performance, arguably, is a demonstrative act which embraces results as well as the effective use of appropriate skills, knowledge, competence and behaviours to achieve them. (p. 5).

Forrester's (2011) view on performance appraisal has raised the issue of performance related pay. She believes that the performance related pay system has not been helpful. Forrester (2011) makes a good point because essentially what she claims is that performance appraisal shouldn’t be about good performance for pay increases. It should as Cardno (2012) says, allow colleagues to engage in a dialogue that leads to learning and change. If middle level professional leaders are engaged effectively in performance management processes within the human resource management system, they will be able to gain feedback on their performance, engage in dialogue about possible improvements, identify professional (and possible leadership development) development needs, and work towards agreed changes that align with the organisation’s goal and strategic vision (Warner and Crosthwaite, 1995).

**Professional development**

Like performance appraisal, professional development is also not a stand-alone process and usually it is being embedded in performance appraisal (Warner & Crosthwaite, 1995). This theme is also vital because it assists in the understanding of institutional commitments to leadership development as well as the leadership
development experiences and practices of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics. Literature on professional development from Cardno (2012) claims that professional development should be a result of performance appraisal. Cardno (2012) states “professional development is a corollary of performance appraisal. If we know how well we are performing our job and how good students are learning, then we might be able to pinpoint the areas in our performance that could be improved” (p.98). She explains that performance appraisal should inform professional development and that both should be linking to each other. Authors (such as: Hall, 2009; Holbeche, 2008; Warner & Crosthwaite, 1995) maintain that just like performance appraisal, professional development in HEIs is the responsibility of human resource management.

Cardno’s (2012) model on the holistic view on professional development shows that professional development sits under the umbrella of the strategic management and planning and educational leadership which is supported by organisational development, curriculum development, management development and personal development with performance appraisal at its core. Cardno’s (2012) model uses educational leadership as one of the four components that supports professional development. This is true in the sense that without leadership there is no direction about where one is going. Educational leaders set the culture and provide for professional development to take place.

Another component of Cardno’s (2012) model is that strategic management and review are overarching to guide and evaluate planning. This should be related to the organisation’s goals so that employees and the organisation are on the same page which is linked to performance appraisal and human resource management. Performance appraisal is at the core of Cardno’s (2012) model. This according to her is because performance appraisal informs professional development and professional development leads to improvement, improvement in employees which benefits the organisation. The quadrants in Cardno’s (2012) model are of equal size which signifies that the components in each quadrant is of equal importance for ongoing improvement and moving the employee and organisation forward.
In terms of New Zealand practice, Cardno (2012) has identified two ineffective approaches to professional development. The first one, the smorgasbord approach, is where a budget is allocated to professional development and staff members choose what they want to do from a range of events. The second one, the do-it-all approach, is based on the belief that school should respond to all opportunities for training. Both approaches are viewed as something that must be done (like a tick-box exercise) rather than as resulting from performance appraisal or in a planned cycle, contradicting what the literature on performance appraisal identified earlier has recommended.

Bolam (2002) claims that there will be tensions and dilemmas that come with the territory of professional development if external changes in education influence the management of professional development. Bolam (2002) states that “professional development is widely accepted as fundamental to the improvement of organizational performance and therefore, as a core task of management and leadership” (p.103). He identifies four trends that are affecting professional development: (1) the introduction of professional standards, (2) performance related pay, (3) increased focus on evidence-formed practice and, (4) the emergence of professional learning communities. This view holds true for many New Zealand institutions where the focus is on academic staff and not enough research is conducted in professional development opportunities for non-academic staff in New Zealand HEIs.

A qualitative study conducted by Richardson (2008) on administrator’s (non-academics) professional development in a New Zealand polytechnic revealed that administrators within the New Zealand polytechnic he studied were engaged in professional development however their perception was that they were not valued by the organisation. Richardson’s (2008) study also revealed that appropriate professional development programmes were not available to administrators or administrators had difficulty in finding the time to engage in professional development. If Richardson’s claims hold true, then it begs the question as to how performance appraisal is conducted effectively to gauge an individual's development
and plan for progression in educational organisations. It must be noted that Richardson’s (2008) study makes no mention of the involvement of the organisation’s human resource management arm in professional development. Authors (for example; Oldroyd and Hall, 1997; Anderson, 2003; Partington & Stainton, 2003) continue to advocate that professional development is vital for all staff (not just academics) in the higher education sector and Richardson’s (2008) study highlights the importance of human resource management and effective performance appraisal in understanding professional and leadership development. Cardno (2012) reiterates that “development needs identification and alignment at the individual, departmental and organisational level” (p. 94). This holds true within a leadership framework as without planning, leadership will not be strategic. Oldroyd (2005) adds to this point when he states that “continual professional development (CPD) for individuals and teams is logically placed after appraisal in the rational human resource management model because one purpose of appraisal is to identify development needs” (p.195). Both are interlinked.

Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007) highlight the importance of the creating a culture of valuing professional development in an organisation. They argue that professional development does not take place in isolation but in a social context of practice, and the kind of learning that impacts on student outcomes requires considerable challenge and support. This view on professional development is considered as a planned and cohesive programme with the process of performance appraisal at its centre, which supports what Cardno (2012) claims. Bolman and Deal (2008) add to this view when they maintain that every organisation should invest in its employees if they want long-term success. Professional development, like performance appraisal is investments in human capital contributing to the primary purpose of education which Mercer, Barker and Bird (2010) contend must be to enhance productivity and support economic growth. However, caution should be taken as incorrect performance appraisal may result in misaligned professional development.
The middle level professional leader

Globally, the terms middle leader and middle manager are used interchangeably. The concept of middle leadership or middle management can be viewed through multiple lenses. Understanding the role of middle level professional leaders contributes to the exploration of the nature of leadership development in New Zealand polytechnics. In the management literature, Huy (2001) describes middle managers as “any managers between two levels, below the CEO and one level above line workers and professionals” (p. 73). Dopson, Risk and Stewart (1992) describe middle managers as “those below the small group of top strategic managers and above first-level supervision” (p. 40) while Minnitzberg (1989) suggests that middle managers are those positioned between the apex and the operating core in a hierarchical system.

In the higher education context, all staff are ‘academics’ (those who teach or engage in research) or ‘non-academics’ (those who do not teach or engage in research). Different authors have different terms associated with the terms ‘academic’ and ‘non-academic’ staff. Szekeres (2006) uses the terms ‘administrators’ and ‘general staff’ to identify non-academic staff in higher education. Blackwell and Blackmore (2003) state that “the term ‘non-academic’ is avoided since it seeks to describe a large group of people as what they are not, and so ‘support staff’ is preferred” (p.xii).

Gumport and Pusser (1995) argue that there is no consistency in how administration or administrative functions are defined in higher education. It is therefore vital that human resource management, performance appraisal and professional development are considered when reviewing and planning for the development of non-academic roles. Because there is a lack of literature on the roles and value of non-academic staff, defining non-academic staff can be simply where staff are not engaged in academic practice (teaching and research). Whitchurch (2007) suggests that “such classifications, which might be convenient for statistical reporting purposes, represent neither the complexity nor the reality of work in universities today. Specifically, the use of the official term ‘non-academic to describe university staff
who do not have an academic role is at best unhelpful” (p.7). Whitchurch (2007) suggests the use of the term ‘professional staff’.

Szekeres (2006) identifies non-academic staff as ranging from registrar, resource management to front-office receptionists, secretaries, security, maintenance, library, legal technicians, accountants, marketers, and human resource specialists. Mortimore and Mortimore (1994) refer to ‘associate staff’ as “those who are employed in schools, but who are neither teachers, nor training to be teachers” (p.1).

Concerns have been raised by Conway (2000) and Szkeres (2006) about the lack of study or research done around non-academic staff in higher education. This is reinforced by McInnis (1998) who states “there has been remarkably little systematic study of the roles and values of university administration staff” (p. 61). However, according to Bush and Middlewood (2005), there has been a significant increase in research and literature on non-academic staff employed in higher education. This contradicts McInnis’ (1998) argument about the lack of study around administration staff in higher education. Welsh and Metcalf (2003) claim that whatever research that has been done around non-academic staff, has been on focused on the differences (and tensions) between academic and non-academic staff and on faculty perceptions of the value of non-academic staff.

This claim holds true in the sense that there is not much research done specifically on leadership development of non-academic staff in higher education (and in the New Zealand polytechnic context specifically). Bush and Middlewood (2005) add to this when they maintain that "literature concerning those in a support role for teachers in many countries are very limited, and in some countries such staff simply do not exist" (p.31). However, they do add that in the UK, the importance of support staff in education has become a significant issue for two reasons; (1) the increasing appreciation of the need to recognise and utilise the skills of all employees to support the increased focus on learning and, (2) since the movement towards self-governance, education systems have become much more conscious of cost-
effectiveness. Rosser (2004) highlights the importance of ‘mid-level administrators’ (that they provide value to the institution) to the higher education context and concludes by calling for more research on midlevel administrators so that their careers and issues are brought to the front for discussion.

Bush and Middlewood (2005) highlight that all staff in an education environment are entitled to training and they acknowledge that the reality is, that training for support staff (professional staff) is less widespread. They add that if staff members are not given opportunities in training, their skills that contribute to the organisation’s effectiveness decreases and it indicates that they are undervalued. They add that “offering no training may indicate that this is a job that anyone can do!” (p.35). This also highlights the importance of conducting effective performance appraisals and professional development planning as well as the role of human resource management as raised earlier.

Blackwell and Blackmore (2003) stress that staff development is not only about academic staff, and not only about teaching and student learning. They add “ironically that institutions that deliver professional development for others do little of it for themselves. Yet staff expertise is the most important asset in a university; without it literally nothing can be achieved” (p.23). Kydd, Crawford and Riches (1997) argue that “learning and development are seen as essential if workers are to adapt to ever-accelerating change in their fields of practice and if they are to make positive contributions to driving up standards and increasing efficiency” (p.29). Their views add value and strength to the notion that non-academic staff are essential to educational institutions and so is their development professionally.

Understanding the role of middle level professional leaders is the first step in exploring the nature of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics. Rosser (2004) states that “middle-managers in higher education are the ‘unsung professionals in the academy yet they interact and participate with students, faculty members and the public and reflect the institution’s overall spirit and
vitality” (p. 317). Clegg and McAuley (2005) suggest four dominant discourses on the concept of middle management; one that depicts middle management as representing core organisational values and that through this values orientation middle managers become an agent of organisational control (emerging from the 1970s), the second that emerged in the late 1970s is viewed as a layer of noise between the vision and strategies of senior management, the third in the early 1980s that saw the middle manager as someone who was representing the views of higher management and the fourth discourse which emerged in the later 1980s saw the role transform into one of coach, mentor and facilitator.

Branson, Franken and Penney (2015) in their study on middle leadership for chair persons in a New Zealand university faculty suggest that the roles of middle leadership in higher education “are closely associated with some form of delegated administrative and managerial responsibility, and involves direct accountability to a line manager, a person occupying a far more significant leadership role” (p.2). Branson et al. (2015) caution readers that the reality is that middle level leadership roles are conjoined as both management and supervisory responsibilities and include heads of faculty, department heads, discipline area coordinators, student enrolment advisors, and award level coordinators. This view is also supported by various studies in USA, the UK and Australia (such as: Bryman, 2007; Inman, 2009; Rosser, 2004) that have suggested that middle managers in higher education are personnel occupying positions below the level of dean, such as directors, associate deans, heads of school and faculty or institutional research registrars.

Earley and Bubb (2004) and O’Connor (2008) argue that middle leaders play a vital role in controlling and influencing the flow of information between academic staff and the senior administrative staff. Briggs (2004) provides five aspects of middle managers’ roles in colleges in England; (1) corporate agent, (2) implementer, (3) staff manager, (4) liaison and (5) leader. The role of a corporate agent as described by Briggs is one with a macro view who can understand the strategic vision and values of the college and work within internal and external forces. The implementer role is one who can carry out tasks that relate to the strategic vision and goals. The
staff manager role is in sync with the implementer role as the staff manager is responsible for people management. The liaison role involves liaising with people from various departments within the college and the leader role. Briggs’ (2004) suggestions are similar to that of Clegg and McAuley (2005).

Hoff (1999) argues that no matter where a leader or manager sits in the hierarchal nature of higher educational institutions, middle leaders do not work in a vacuum. The role of the middle level professional leader is therefore crucial because it involves working with and through others (Bennett, Wood, Wise and Newton, 2007; Brundrett, 2006; Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2006). Busher (2005) advocates that middle level leaders facilitate the school’s values to colleagues, students and wider stakeholders in addition to reporting the values of colleagues, students and wider stakeholders to senior management. Busher (2005) adds that middle level leaders act as a liaison between management and staff, like one of the suggestions made by Briggs (2004) and what Busher and Harris (1999) describe as ‘bridging and brokering’. Thus, it is crucial to note that the role of middle level professional leaders in higher education is significantly important and complex due to the various responsibilities they hold. A noticeable gap in the literature on non-academic staff is related to the effectiveness and development of non-academic leadership in higher education and the New Zealand polytechnic sector.

Challenges for middle leaders
The literature on middle leadership in education has revealed a wide range of challenges faced by those in middle leadership roles. Although the literature is not specific to middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics, the challenges around middle leadership from examining middle leadership in schools and other higher education institutions (such as universities) can inform our understanding of the complexities and difficulties that middle leaders encounter.

Bennett et al. (2007) identified two key challenges for middle leadership; (1) the expectation of dual loyalty to senior management and staff and (2) being caught
between the hierarchical culture (in terms of line management) of the institution and yet be expected to operate with cooperation and collegiality within their area of responsibility. Branson, et al. (2015) add substance to this claim by stating “by accepting delegated responsibility, the middle leader is set apart structurally from his or her colleagues, yet is expected to work closely alongside those colleagues as a fellow member of the department or Faculty, with many of the same day-to-day academic responsibilities as their colleagues” (p. 2). The expectation of meeting a dual role reveals the complexity and heterogeneous nature of middle level professional leadership in higher education.

Similarly, Hammersley-Fletcher and Kirkham (2007) highlight three expectations of middle leadership; the first expectation is around the need for honest communication to build a culture of mutual trust and respect and the second expectation is around monitoring performance. These two expectations contradict each other because the first set of expectations is founded on trust while the formal monitoring of performance may undermine trust. The third expectation is around authority and following instructions. Bennett et al. (2007) claim that although middle leaders are expected to be able to influence those they line manage, their access to funding and resourcing is limited which limits their influence.

Similar challenges are highlighted by Pepper and Giles (2005) who term the situation ‘meat in the sandwich’. The ‘meat in the sandwich’ term is also similar to the terms ‘sandwiched in between’ or ‘caught in between’ used by Marshall (2012) in his study on academic middle leadership in a New Zealand polytechnic. The ‘meat in the sandwich’ is referred to a situation where middle managers feel being caught in between senior management and their peers for whom they are responsible for (in terms of hierarchy). Although not specific to an academic context, Conway and Dobson (2003) highlight something similar where they claim the growing disconnect between university administrative staff and academic staff. Harding, Lee and Ford (2014) make similar distinctions but have termed middle managers in this role as “a person whose identity moves between the subject positions of controller, controlled, resister and resisted” (p.1231). By this they mean that the middle leader moves
between one who is controlled by senior management but has to control those below (for those they line manage) and one who may resist senior management and may be resisted by own colleagues.

Another challenge identified in the literature for middle level leaders is the lack of time. Several authors (such as; Adey, 2000; Bennett et al., 2007; Fitzgerald, 2009; Brown, Rutherford and Boyle, 2000; Dinham, 2007) have highlighted the lack of time as a challenge for middle leaders. With the increasing responsibilities for middle leaders as well as a continuous revolving education context, middle leaders are constantly challenged for time to complete their tasks. For example, those engaged to increase research outputs often compete between completing administrative tasks and completing their functional expertise.

**Understanding leadership development**
In the literature on leadership development (such as from Cardno; 2012, Van Velsor & McCauley; 2004, and Bush; 2010) the terms leader development and leadership development have been identified has separate terms. Understanding the two distinct terms is vital in the journey of understanding the nature of leadership development in New Zealand polytechnics. Allen, Conklin, and Hart and Day (as cited in Ardichvili & Manderscheid, 2008) suggest that leader development is “individual level development, whereas leadership development involves interaction between individual leaders and the social–cultural environment in which they function” (p.621). Olivares, Peterson, and Hess (2007) have argued that the development of individuals alone is not adequate and that effective leadership must involve the individual’s development being integrated in the context of the organisation’s strategies, mission and goals.

Van Velsor and McCauley (2004) suggest that leader development is about developing a person’s capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes whereas in leadership development, the focus is on developing the capacity of an organisation (as a group). They introduce us to a model that they believe has three
elements of leadership development. The elements they have identified in the first part of their model are; (1) assessment, (2) challenge and (3) support. They explain that when the elements of assessment, challenge and support are combined, they have a powerful impact on the developmental experiences. The assessment element focuses on where an employee is, employee goals, finding gaps, finding out areas of need for development, reflection, and knowing one’s strengths. The challenge element is about questioning oneself, putting oneself out of one’s comfort zone, finding weaknesses, tackling difficult goals, accepting and acting on feedback and reflection. The final element, support, is more personalised. There is active listening, coaching, being valued, fostering development, confirmation, recognition and reflection. These elements can be fostered by conducting effective performance appraisal and professional development with the involvement of human resource management.

In the second part of their model, Van Velsor and McCauley (2004) explain what the model’s message is. They indicate that given all the elements of assessment, challenge and support, the willingness and ability to learn needs to be present in leadership development. This is true in every sense because without the willingness to want to learn or the ability, leadership development cannot be effective. Their key message is that leadership development is an on-going process. They reiterate that leadership development is:

- grounded in personal development, which is never complete. It is embedded in experience: leaders learn as they expand their experiences over time. It is facilitated by interventions that are woven into those experiences in meaningful ways. And it includes, but goes well beyond, individual leader development. It includes the development of the connections between individuals, the development of capacities of collectives, the development of the connections between collectives in an organisation, and the development of the culture and systems in which individuals and collectives are embedded. (p.22).
This explains that leadership development is seen a whole system of learning where the benefits go beyond just the individual and reach the organisation. During this process, the person learns and develops and this in turn is churned back into the organisation, which benefits from the individual’s development. Bush (2010) claims that leadership development is important in education and is a specialist occupation that requires specific preparation. Bush (2011) argues that “the development of effective leaders should not be left to chance. It should be a deliberate process designed to produce the best possible leadership and management for schools and colleges” (p.127).

Hempsall (2014) in a study which investigated leadership development thinking, programmes and practices within the HE sector in USA and the UK, and explored how these were applied within the Australian context suggested that pathways leading into management and leadership roles in higher education were not planned. While good in theory, in reality, most leadership development takes places because of individual choices. Not many people employed in the education sector choose educational leadership as a programme of study unless they have an interest in it. If one is to follow Bush’s (2010) recommendation that leadership development should be planned and Hempsall’s (2014) recommendation that leadership development needs to be planned and carefully executed, staff employed within HEIs should study educational leadership, not just to provide effective educational leadership but to also understand the potentials and pitfalls of their managers so that the benefit is organisation-wide.

In their study on leadership development, Piggot-Irvine and Youngs (2011) claim that the expectation that leadership for learning should strengthen the New Zealand principal’s role, including their management responsibilities, is very clearly signalled in the policy Kiwi Leadership for Principals (Ministry of Education, 2009). Both claim that the Best Evidence Synthesis and Kiwi for Leadership for Principals affirm that school leadership does matter for student outcomes. This is reinforced by Timperley et al. (2007). Day (2001) suggests that leadership development involves interaction between individual leaders and the social–cultural environment in which they
function. Cardno (2012) identifies three elements of leadership development: (1) management training (a process which enables managers to develop hands-on skills through practice guided by formal structures, for example, short training sessions, (2) management education (learning that takes place in a structured formal institutional framework that leads to a qualification, for example, studying for a Master’s degree) and, (3) management support (on-the-job opportunities and off the job opportunities that lead to professional growth).

Cardno (2012) maintains that leadership development cannot take place in any organisation that does not know what it is or if the organisation is not prepared to allow leadership to grow. Leadership development is an investment, in people. It requires resources (time and financial support) to enable it to grow and this means the drivers of leadership development need to be those that can influence decisions and those who are responsible for planning, which more than often is the human resource management arm of an organisation. The reality in many educational institutions is that without the support of a leader who believes in leadership development, leadership development does not take place.

Rudman (2002) claims that leadership development is a broad concept which includes several managerial elements—management training, management support and management of education which is similar to Cardno’s (2012) model. Ramsden (1998) provides a leadership development model that contains three elements as well; (1) self-personal leadership development, (2) department-leadership for academic work and, (3) system-university and beyond. Scott & McKellar (2012) in a study they conducted on leadership in Australia and New Zealand tertiary education institutions point out that “everyone is a leader in their own area of expertise and responsibility” (p.12). If their claim holds true, then leadership development should be considered a pivotal part of performance appraisal and professional development within higher education.
Drago-Severson (2012) in her study on leadership development in education provides a contrasting model for leadership development which draws on adult development theory. Drago-Severson’s (2012) model promotes the notion that for leaders to help others grow, these leaders need to understand their own capacities before they can help others. In a similar study conducted by Chang, Longman and Franco’s (2014) on leadership development which saw a mix of academic and administrative staff being interviewed, the notion of mentoring (with the benefit of personal growth) is advocated as the most important tool for leadership development. This also supports Ramsden’s (1998) element on personal leadership and contrasts with those who say that leadership development is about improving the institution.

Muijs et al. (2006) in their study on leadership development of ten case studies in ‘further’ education organisations outlined three types of leadership development; (1) experiential leadership development-based on learning through structured experience (for example, mentoring, secondments), (2) individual leadership development- individual work, and (3) course-based (or collective) leadership development- for example, workshops. Muijs et al. (2006) concluded that no particular method of leadership development was more effective than the other and they recommend the need for more research in this area.

Leadership development is vital to educational institutions as the quality of leaders and leadership are crucial to producing enhanced learning outcomes for students. Rosser (2004) who surveyed 4,000 middle level leaders, (which included academic and professional staff) in her national study, reiterated that middle level leaders were vital to the institutions they served as they supported the primary functions of teaching, research and service which contributes to enhanced student learning outcomes. Graham (2013) in her case study which involved reviewing 146 international studies and interviewing a range of professional staff provided several recommendations to assist in the improvement of outcomes for student and improving the working lives of both professional and academic staff.
A study conducted by Jackson and Kile (2004) examined how professional staff in higher education affect student learning outcomes. They acknowledge that the outcome of the study, which found that professional staff contribute to student learning outcomes, is a recent discovery. Rosser (2004) acknowledges the importance of professional staff and the value to the higher education context and concludes by calling for more research on professional staff so that their careers and issues are brought to the front for discussion. Blackmore and Blackwell (2003) highlight that all staff in higher education are entitled to leadership development opportunities. However, the reality is, that leadership development for middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics is sparse which is why this study is vital.

Johnsrud, Heck and Rosser (2000) maintain that professional staff contribute to the academic life of organisations. This is in line with Blackwell and Blackmore’s (2003) support for professional staff to engage in leadership development. Kalargyrou et al. (2012) in their study on leadership constituents in a hospitality management education setting highlighted that administrators within a faculty were placed in leadership positions with little or no leadership experience, skills or development. Although their study focussed on the skills needed by leaders to be effective, it provides substance to the claim that the leadership development of professional staff is vital to support the work of academics to enhance student learning outcomes. Hempsall (2014) in his study of 29 participants from Australia, UK and USA revealed that there is inconsistency in preparation for leadership roles in higher education. Hempsall concludes that there is strong support for the need to do things differently at the individual level but that at the organisational level, the culture, systems and mechanisms in place largely appear to maintain the status quo.

Vilkinas (2014) validates the notion that the role of middle level professional leaders within higher education is significant as these leaders are “the ‘enablers’ who assist academics to do their job” (p.321). Vilkinas (2014) also confirms the relevance of my research questions as he mirrors my concern that it is important to explore what is
happening on leadership development of middle level professional leaders in the New Zealand polytechnic context.

**Summary**

In this chapter the literature concerning the leadership development of middle level professional leaders was critically reviewed. The literature revealed that the role of middle level professional leaders is heterogeneous and undervalued. As HEIs evolve so does the role of middle level professional leaders which requires leadership development opportunities that enable middle level professional leaders to fulfil their leadership practices to enhance organisational success. The literature confirmed that there is value in developing middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics and confirm the relevance of the research topic and research questions. The following chapter provides an overview of the methodology with justification for the constructivist paradigm adopted.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction
This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology and provides a rationale for adopting a constructivist epistemology for this study and consequently a qualitative approach to the methodology, data collection and analysis. In addition, an explanation of the research design, outline of participant selection and sample is provided, with a brief description of the data analysis framework. A discussion of the validity and ethical considerations relevant to the study conclude this chapter.

Research methodology
The essence of this study was to explore the concept of leadership development of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics. This was done with the ultimate purpose of investigating institutional commitments to developing middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics and examining leadership development practices and experiences of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics. Therefore, a qualitative approach using qualitative research methods was adopted within a constructivist paradigm.

The notion of constructivism described by Bryman (2004) is an ontological position that emphasises that organisations and culture are socially constructed and are in a continuous cycle of revision. This is supported by Creswell (2002) who maintains that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. This position implies that I relied on participants’ views on the topic of leadership development.

Davidson and Tolich (2003) explain that a constructivist paradigm gives the researcher the opportunity to reflect on the experiences of those being researched and look for interpretations that will assist the understanding and description of what is occurring. This stance was significantly relevant when applied to the context of the research on middle level professional leaders’ perceptions and experiences of
leadership development. Questions asked in the semi-structured interviews were general questions which allowed participants to create meanings out of their interactions with other persons (Creswell, 2002). Additionally, this indicates that I could recognise that professional middle level leaders in New Zealand polytechnics interpreted the environment differently and then responded in many ways, which is similar to the views of Guba and Lincoln (2005).

Davidson and Tolich (2003) add that an interpretive approach is about understanding how people create meaning in their social worlds through observation. Knowledge around leadership development of middle level professional leaders was collated as participants shared their perceptions and experiences of leadership development in the New Zealand polytechnic context. Since the problem (leadership development of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics) that was researched involved interpersonal relationships, emotions, actions and values that create meaning (subjective and/or objective), this research was undertaken from an interpretive perspective. The study collected data that were analysed qualitatively.

Bryman (2004) claims that the interpretive approach emphasises the importance of gathering data to interpret and understand social interactions, social meaning and social context in which people act. Essentially, this means that qualitative research methods focus primarily on the kind of evidence that people tell the researcher and what they do, which enables the researcher to understand the meaning of what is going on (Burns, 1990). Burns also adds that because there is a need for the researcher to associate with the research participants in qualitative research, this gives the researcher an “insider’s view of the field. This proximity of field allows the evaluator to see and document the qualities of educational interactions, too often missed by quantitative methodologies” (p.12).

Bell (2010) and Denzin and Lincoln (2000) share similar views around the notion of a qualitative approach- that within this view, qualitative researchers concentrate on the interpretations of the individual. I linked this approach to my research questions for
this study that asked middle level professional leaders and human resource/organisational development managers to provide their understanding and perceptions of leadership development from both an individual and organisational level.

Additionally, a qualitative methodology provided me with some flexibility with my research questions. According to Punch (2005), qualitative research starts with a broader approach to the questions and becomes more specific as the study develops. I started the interviews with broader questions around roles and responsibilities before narrowing the questions to specific questions—such as on training provided before and after appointment to the role. This also assisted with building a rapport with the participants. As I had not known the participants prior to the interview, it was vital to establish a rapport before we could proceed with the questions.

The methodology determined the choice of tool to be used for collection of data. Burns (1990) defines research methodology as an organised approach to explaining a problem that involves on-going collection, analysis and interpretation of data. On the other hand, Davidson and Tolich (1999) maintain that “when we talk about methodology, what we are really talking about is a certain order of philosophical commitment” (p. 25). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) suggest that research that uses an interpretive approach looks at the different components of an environment as well as how these components interact and connect to form a whole.

When looking at methodologies for this research, I considered that data gathered from professional middle level leaders’ and human resource managers’ experiences and perceptions provided insight into their understanding of leadership development in the New Zealand polytechnic context.
Method
When considering what methods would best answer the research questions, one method emerged; a semi-structured survey. A survey in the form of semi-structured interviews offered the ability to hear the participants’ experiences and perceptions of leadership development within the New Zealand polytechnic they work in. I employed only one method of data collection given that the topic was about exploring participants’ experiences which they shared via the semi-structured interviews.

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) suggest that with semi-structured interviews it is possible to obtain comparable data across respondents however they warn that employing this method means the researcher will lose the opportunity to understand how the respondents themselves structure the topic at hand. They do comfort researchers who choose this method by arguing that researchers should choose a method based on the research goal. Hinds (2000) advocates using a semi-structured approach when the research “needs in-depth information, or subject matter is potentially sensitive, or the issues under examination would benefit from development or clarification” (p.47). This stance was relevant to my study as in-depth information was needed from respondents and research is needed around the issue(s) of leadership development of middle level professional leaders.

Burns (1990) labels interviews as ‘observer-observed interaction’ and claims that if the researcher models the interviews:

after a conversation between two trusting parties rather than a formal question-and-answer session between a researcher and a respondent, it is only in this manner that they can capture what is important in the minds of the subjects themselves. (p.244).

This highlights the importance of the researcher’s skills. Bell (2010) maintains that interviews provide the researcher with flexibility as they can query answers, and
examine participants’ experiences and perceptions. Bryman (2004) supports this by stating “questions may not follow on exactly in the way outlined on the schedule. Questions that are not included in the guide may be asked as the interviewer picks up on things said by the interviewees” (p. 438).

The semi-structured interviews enabled me to guide the interview as well as allowed opportunities for further exploration of participants’ comments as necessary. The Interview Schedule is attached as Appendix 1. This assisted me to pursue unexpected lines of conversations as inquiry as the interviews unfolded. I used a combination of predefined questions and some discussion between myself and the participant. Bryman (2004) maintains that a semi-structured interview “refers to a context in which the interviewer has a series of questions that are in the general form of an interview schedule but is able to vary the sequence of questions” (p.113). This means that there may be some pre-defined questions however the researcher can ask further questions depending on the answer(s) of the participant. This view is supported by Newby (2010) who claims that a semi-structured interview “fits between the questionnaire (where there is no freedom to deviate) and the evolving interview (which has known goals but not necessarily any known end points)” (p.340). Cardno (2003) maintains that interviews provide valuable data. This is also supported by Anderson (as cited in Cardno, 2003) who claims that interviews are the most extensively utilised data collection methods in educational research.

In terms of practice and application, I piloted the interview schedule. The advantage of piloting is to ensure that questions in the interview are concise and follow an order, therefore leading to successful planning of the process. Hinds (2000) proposes that piloting provides interviewers with practical feedback from a peer about their interview technique. I piloted the interview process with colleagues at my own place of employment.

In terms of sample, I used a purposive sample. Bryman (2004) refers to purposive sampling as using participants that have a direct relationship with the research
questions. There are sixteen polytechnics in New Zealand. I used a purposive sample and carried out individual interviews with middle level professional leaders and human resource managers/organisational development managers. I utilised my membership within the Association for Tertiary Education Managers (ATEM) network to identify New Zealand polytechnic participants who were willing to be interviewed for this study.

ATEM is the only professional association for administrators and managers working in tertiary education in Australasia. It is dedicated to advancing professional practice. The Association provides members with a voice in their areas of expertise in the wider tertiary environment. Not every member is a middle manager or a human resource manager in the ATEM network. Members only need to be associated with a tertiary institution to be part of the network (regardless of role in their organisation). Those who agreed to participate were able to identify other participants who were willing to participate (snowball sample). The Association did not provide a list of names. The Association sends out weekly emails to its members and participants for this study were approached via a notice posted in an ATEM email. Interested participants were asked to contact me by email. As the notice was not an advert and just an email that was circulated, the text was included in the information sheet. Although not all professional staff members within these sixteen polytechnics were members of the ATEM network, there were enough members in the network who were interested to participate and who could refer on others to participate.

Six middle level professional leaders and three human resource/organisational development managers from different polytechnics across New Zealand were interviewed. Several authors (such as; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Cohen et al., 2007; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Bryman, 2008) have argued that it is challenging to ascertain how many interviews will need to be conducted to achieve data saturation however five to eight interviews have been noted as “pedagogically valuable – but this decision is tied to the course’s specific goals and time constraints” (p.138) by Tracy (2013). This approach of collating experiences and perceptions of leadership development from a purposive sample of nine professional staff members in New
Zealand polytechnics through semi-structured interviews provided rich data that was able to satisfy the research aims of the study. The criteria for participant selection included; (1) being a middle level professional leader, (2) being a human resource and/or organisational development manager, or (3) employed in a New Zealand polytechnic.

The semi-structured interview allowed for focus on the research topic as well as provided flexibility to describe a polytechnic’s approach to leadership development. Information gained from the interviews were about the roles and responsibilities of middle level professional leaders, understanding leadership development in New Zealand polytechnics (from a middle level professional leader’s perspective and human resource manager’s perspective), the experiences and perceptions of leadership development of middle level professional leaders, leadership development opportunities and challenges facing middle level leaders.

Where I was unable to travel due to geographical location of the participant, I used voice recording and electronic software (Skype) to interview participants. A factor to consider is the process of recording and transcribing. Bryman (2004) suggests that in qualitative research, researchers are “interested not just in what people say but also in the way that they say it” (p.329). It is important that this transcription is an accurate record of what has been said by the participants and the use of a recording device is essential in this situation. Bell (2010) agrees that recording an interview can be useful when:

you are attempting any form of content analysis and need to be able to listen several times in order to identify categories but perhaps it is most useful because it allows you to code, summarise and to note comments which are of particular interest without having to try to write them down during the course of the interview. (p. 167).
This led to three participants being interviewed via Skype, four participants being interviewed in person and two participants were interviewed via telephone. The participants who were interviewed via telephone were initially scheduled to be interviewed via Skype however they encountered problems with their internet and Skype connection and decided to be interviewed by telephone. The interviews were conducted for about 45-60 minutes.

**Data analysis**
The process of gathering data and extracting information in relation to the research topic is a vital part of the research study. Davidson and Tolich (1999) state that “analysis is about searching for patterns and regularities in the data collected” (p.143). Newby (2010) suggests that sometimes the information revealed from the data may be straightforward and sometimes it may be vague. Newby (2010) reminds researchers that it is the task of the researcher to uncover the information gathered from the data and apply it to the research question(s). “The focus on text-on qualitative data than on numbers-is the most important feature of qualitative data analysis” (Check and Schutt, 2012, p.300). The ‘text’ they refer to here in the study are the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews.

Lichtman (2013) suggests that “data analysis as being about process, and interpretation. Whether you analyse your data using statistics or choose some other method, there is a process you follow and interpretations to be made from that process” (p. 245). Lichtman (2013) also adds that it is vital that planning how to analyse data should precede actual data collection. When looking at data analysis, Davidson and Tolich (1999) recommend the following steps in data analysis; (1) data collection, (2) data reduction- reducing the data into a manageable form, (3) data organisation-organising data around themes and, (4) data interpretation-using the patterning of the data to make decisions and conclusions and where patterns and regularities are identified and explanations offered. A key point that was considered in relation to the quality of the study was that data extracted from the information provided by the participants is a representative sample and not just the aspects that interest the researcher (Cohen et al., 2007).
Participants confirmed their availability about a week in advance and the interviews were kept to schedule. Each participant had agreed to be audio recorded and I used a small digital recorder as well as computer recording software as a backup recorder. Before the actual recording began, I made time to introduce myself to the participant and explained my background and why I was conducting this research. This was vital as I had not met the interviewees prior. Participants signed a consent form as previously agreed via e-mail (see Appendix 3) and sent this in prior to the interview taking place.

As the interviews were completed, I began transcribing and began initial analysis for themes. Within the interpretive framework, thematic coding identified the meanings that are behind the experiences and perceptions of the middle level professional leaders and human resource managers. A hermeneutic perspective, where the researcher creates a reality by interpreting text provided through the semi-structured interviews, was applied to the analysis (Check and Schutt, 2012). This meant that I became the central instrument in this highly interactive process between the data and the researcher (Check & Schutt, 2012). A limitation of thematic analysis as claimed by Lichtman (2013) is that it functions from a reductionist perspective, that is, it questions whether the themes paint an adequate picture of what a person thinks.

Further to Davidson and Tolich’s (1999) suggestion on data analysis, I took on Lichtman’s (2013) suggestion of the 3Cs (coding, categorising and concepts). Lichtman suggests a six-step process to “move from raw data to themes/concepts” (p.254). The six-step process involved the following; (1) initial coding, (2) revisiting initial coding, (3) initial listing of categories, (4) modifying the initial list, (5) revisiting categories and, (6) moving from categories to concepts. Nine semi-structured interviews provided me with rich data that needed to be approached in an organised manner to allow themes to emerge. I used two approaches – coding and memos (Bryman, 2012). During coding, I used two coding elements; initial coding and focused coding. Initial coding is when you go through your interview transcript line by line and identify key words and ideas (Bryman, 2012; Flick, 2014; and Lofland,
Snow, Anderson and Lofland, 2006). This meant that I highlighted the interviews to sort the data into sub-themes to complete the initial coding. I had to read and re-read and group and re-group sub themes. I then tried to narrow down the sub themes into major themes. This focused act of coding (Lofland et al., 2006 and Flick, 2014) meant I had to select the major themes that emerged and tried to identify links. Once I had finished with the coding process, I laid out the themes in relation to the interviews.

As I conducted interviews, read through the literature and embarked on analysing the data, I used memos to make notes for myself. The idea of using memos is supported by Bryman (2012) who suggests that memos act as prompts as well as an avenue for reflection. The use of memos was invaluable as I was caught between trying to cope with moving to a new country and the demands of a new job. The idea of the use of memos is also supported by Lofland et al. (2006) who suggest that without the use of memos, valuable data may be lost.

This organised approach allowed relevant themes to unfold. The data was then merged which permitted me to summarise key findings at the end of transcription. The themes that emerged from the analysis process have been linked to the themes the literature has produced in Chapter 2.

**Validity**

The notion of validity is concerned with the degree to which the research questions, data collection methods and findings accurately indicate the concept of leadership development that the researcher examined in the study (Davidson & Tolich, 1999). According to Davidson and Tolich (1999), validity refers to the “extent to which a question or variable accurately reflects the concept the researcher is actually looking for” (p. 31). This perception of validity is supported by Bell (2010). In addition, David and Tolich (1999) argue that the notion of validity can be external and internal. They refer to external validity as “generalisability of the findings
gathered in the research, whereas internal validity refers to the design of the research project” (p.32).

Cohen et al. (2007) explain that to increase the validity of the data, different methods need to be used to research the same concept. Their claim (similar to David and Tolich, 1999 and Bell, 2010) is that internal validity is about verifying the explanations that emerged from the data and whether these are accurate description of the concept being researched. Bryman (2004) adds to the notion of internal validity by introducing the concepts of trustworthiness and credibility of the data. Bryman (2004) claims that respondent validation is another method of internal validity. I utilised respondent validation when I returned the completed interview transcripts to the participants for checking and making amendments. Only two participants sent through minor changes (grammatical errors). I sought valid accounts of leadership development within the tertiary institutions identified and have made suggestions of how the findings could be transferred in other contexts if comparable circumstances exist.

Another factor that was considered to increase validity was the process of recording and transcribing. Bryman (2004) suggests that in qualitative research, researchers are “interested not just in what people say but also in the way that they say it” (p.329). It is important that this transcription is an accurate record of what has been said by the participants and the use of a recording device is essential in this situation. I was aware that the accuracy of the transcript data is vital. Bell (2010) and Cohen et al. (2007) claim that when using an interview method to collect data, there is a possibility of researcher bias in the transcript. I ensured that the transcription was recorded accurately and I was the sole transcriber. Hinds (2000) recommends that participants maintain ownership over their data. This was achieved by providing the participants with an opportunity to view and verify the transcripts and revise as what they deem appropriate. An additional disadvantage with this type of data collection is time. Bryman (2004) advises that for every hour of speech, one should allow about five to six hours for transcription. During the transcribing process, I had moved to a new country and there was a delay in transcribing a few of the
transcripts. In addition, a category 5 cyclone affected my new home country and access to electricity was limited which caused further delays in transcribing. However, I kept the participants informed during the delays in transcribing and none of the participants raised any concerns regarding the delay.

Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Bryman, 2004) argue that researchers should not rely exclusively on validity and propose two additional criteria for assessing a qualitative study; (1) trustworthiness (which includes credibility [also known as respondent validation], transferability, dependability and confirmability) and, (2) authenticity. Trustworthiness is defined by Bryman (2004) as a set of conditions used by qualitative researchers for assessing the quality of research. These conditions are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. David and Tolich (1999) argue that the notion of transferability is to provide an actual description of what people said or did in a research location. I anticipate that readers of the study will be able to draw their own conclusions about the transferability of the findings to their own contexts. Confirmability is the process of not allowing personal opinions to influence the process of the study (Bryman, 2004). The key consideration for the study was to ensure that the semi-structured interviews used to collect the data was applied consistently and carefully and accurately recorded in all settings where the study was conducted.

**Ethical issues**
I considered the following ethical concerns that applied to this study; (1) informed consent, and (2) minimisation of harm (Bryman, 2004; Check & Schutt, 2012; Tolich, 2001; Bell, 2010; and Davidson and Tolich, 1999). Participation was entirely voluntary as participants were invited (via the ATEM forum) to take part in the study without pressure and enticement. I obtained permission from all participants. There was no reason for me to not be open about information on the proposed study and participants were given the opportunity to withdraw their participation and their data after the interview, change their responses, or add additional information. It was equally important that participants were informed of what would happen to the data gathered. Participants who engaged in the interviews were provided with an
information sheet (Appendix 2) that fully informed them of the nature of the research and the process. Informed consent was also sought from the participants’ employers.

The issue of minimising harm is extended to providing anonymity and confidentiality over the participants’ records. In the interviews, it was not possible to maintain anonymity as I conducted the interviews. However, pseudonyms were applied to interview participants and I was the sole transcriber for the interviews. I did not release any details publicly and have removed any identifying features from the transcripts, and data. Participants were invited to ask questions and clarify any issues they had. The raw data is locked in a cupboard and electronic files are password protected. Voice recordings are kept on a separate drive from the transcripts. Access is restricted to the research supervisor(s) and I. Data will be kept secure from unauthorised access in an electronic format, for a maximum of ten years following the conclusion of the study, stored at Unitec, and destroyed thereafter.

**Summary**

This chapter presented an overview of the adoption of a constructivist epistemology and the rationale behind the adoption of the chosen epistemology. An outline of participant selection, purposive sampling approach and method of data collection adopted by this study were also discussed. The chapter concluded with a discussion on the issues of validity and ethics that were relevant to this study. The next chapter presents the findings of this research study.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction
This chapter presents the data collected from an exploration of the nature of leadership development of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics by interviewing six middle level professional leaders and three human resource/organisational development managers. Human resource managers were selected to be interviewed to provide an institutional perspective on leadership development experiences. The research design focussed on investigating institutional commitments to developing middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics and examined leadership development practices and experiences of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics. The purpose of the interviews was to collect the perceptions of middle level professional leaders and human resource managers relating to leadership development experiences in New Zealand polytechnics. The interview questions are included in Appendix 1.

As introduced in Chapter Two, for this study, I have coined the term ‘middle level professional leaders’ to reflect “those below the small group of top strategic managers and above first-level supervision” (Dopson, Risk & Stewart, 1992, p.40) who are not on an academic contract in the New Zealand polytechnic context. These middle level professional leaders have responsibility for leading and managing staff who provide support services (such as; student services, information technology, library services, pastoral care, finances, human resources, estates, enterprise and external relations) to academic staff and students (Clegg & McAuley; 2005, Conway & Dobson, 2003; Thomas-Gregory, 2014; Vilkinas, 2014).

Firstly, a brief overview of the participants is given. This is followed by a presentation of the analysed data. The findings have been organised and presented according to the major themes that emerged from the analysed data.
The research participants
Participants were assigned random (not gender specific) codes beginning with HRM or MLPL to indicate their role as a human resource manager or middle level professional leader respectively. For example, a Human Resource Manager was allocated code HRM1, HRM 2 or HRM3 and a middle level professional leader was allocated MLPL1, MLPL2, MLPL3 etc. All participants have been referred to as ‘she’ to protect their identity. The sample of participants included a variety of experience ranging from middle level professional leaders who had been in their role for four years to approximately 11 years. For human resource managers, their years of experience ranged from one year to about 15 years.

Organisation of the findings
The findings have been organised and presented according to the major themes that have emerged from the data. These themes are:

- Roles and Responsibilities of Middle Level Professional Leaders
- Understanding Leadership Development
- Institutional Commitments to Leadership Development
- Selection Criteria for Middle Level Professional Leaders
- Leadership Development Practices and Experiences
- Leadership Development Needs
- Benefits of Leadership Development.

Roles and responsibilities of middle level professional leaders
From the responses, the roles and responsibilities of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics point to a role that is heterogeneous in nature and is linked to other administrative roles. Responses from the six middle level professional leaders revealed that the role encompasses various tasks ranging from the day-to-day running of a campus, developing new programs, managing and overseeing staff, providing administration support for programmes, providing secretarial support to academic committees, bridging the gap between academics and different areas of service provision, providing staff training and mentoring and strategic planning. Responses from the three human resource managers validated
the responses from the middle level professional leaders as their responses also indicated that duties for middle level professional leaders varied in tasks and responsibilities in the provision of student services, finance, human resources, estates, enterprise and external relations.

The interview responses suggest that the roles and responsibilities of middle level professional are heterogeneous in nature and can be placed into two major categories; responsibilities related to people and responsibilities related to expertise. Responsibilities related to people are connected to training staff, managing staff, providing mentoring, and responsibilities related to expertise are concerned with carrying out duties such as secretarial duties to committees, administration support for programmes, generic and faculty/departmental administrative tasks and bridging the gap between academics and their areas of service provision. For example, in terms of responsibilities related to people, one middle level professional leader stated the following:

\[ \text{MLPL5: overseeing staff, managing staff, mentoring staff, also looking after programmes.} \]

In terms of responsibilities related to expertise, a human resource manager stated the following:

\[ \text{HRM2: in charge of staff development, payroll, health and safety, student services (counselling, childcare, academic support, pastoral care), culture.} \]

**Understanding leadership development**

Four out of six middle level professional leaders in this study described leadership development as acquiring skills (such as: interpersonal skills, building trust and confidence, communication skills and conflict resolution) to improve their individual leadership capabilities. One middle level professional leader’s comments summarised the perspective of most middle level professional leaders, by describing leadership development as:
MLPL1: the person should have people skills.

The data reveals that the predominant perspective of middle level professional leaders on leadership development focused on acquiring skills for individual development.

Three human resource managers and two middle level professional leaders describe leadership development as developing and enhancing the leadership capabilities of middle level professional leaders who would in turn develop the leadership capabilities of their staff. In the view of these five participants, the purpose of leadership development of middle level professional leaders is to enable them to develop others and the focus is on contributing to the success of the organisation. The perspective of one human resource manager is provided below:

HRM2: It’s about growing people’s capacity and capability to lead and influence others towards a compelling objective or purpose within the (polytechnic).

The key finding reveals that there is confusion in the use of the terms leader development and leadership development, with the majority of the middle level professional leaders and human resource managers holding different views. The majority of the middle level professional leaders have described leadership development as acquiring skills in order to improve individual leadership capabilities where the focus is on improving the individual whereas all human resource managers and two middle level professional leaders have described leadership development as enhancing the leadership capabilities of middle level professional leaders who would in turn develop the leadership capabilities of their staff, where the focus is on improving the organisation.
Institutional commitments to developing middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics

Responses to questions around expectations on leadership development revealed that two middle level professional leaders did not have any expectations around their leadership development. Their views are given below:

MLPL5: I don't have that much high expectations, learning something new, that’s good for me, just to make a difference.

MLPL3: I’m actually really happy to be where I am now and I love my job and more so at the xx because there was so much training but this team is very experienced so not so much training is needed.

Two other participants' (a middle level professional leader and a human resource manager) responses were framed around obtaining a qualification for career progression. They felt that obtaining a qualification would assist in career advancement.

Five of the nine participants' (one human resource manager and four middle level professional leaders) responses were aligned to expectations around their leadership style(s). One middle level professional leader said:

MLPL6: I would expect as a leader that I am trusted and respected and given the confidence that I can either do things on my own or I can find ways of doing them

The majority of middle level professional leaders indicated they wanted mentorship and coaching from their managers, more time and funding to dedicate to leadership development as well as temporary assistance with personnel to cover their roles while they undertook leadership development activities. Mentoring, engaging with similar communities of practice (networks) and learning on-the-job were suggested as means of strengthening leadership development. As one middle level professional leader stated:
MLPL3: programmes that would connect with people in a similar position as me outside this organisation would be beneficial to me as a leader because we can share ideas, lessons lesson and collaborate for the future.

The three human resource managers’ responses provided the institutional perspective on how support from the institutions fit within the institution’s strategic framework. One human resource manager spoke on the importance of on-the-job learning. She said:

HRM3: I believe that on-the-job learning is the most effective way of learning so I observe that when you’ve got a good leader who understands that their role is to develop leaders who work under them, you’ve got good LD happening on-the-job. It’s where that doesn’t exist within that leader is where I don’t observe leader-led development occurring.

In terms of leadership development opportunities offered to middle level professional leaders prior to their appointment, all six middle level professional leaders agreed that there was no leadership development programme or training offered to them prior to their appointment as a leader. One middle level professional leader stated:

MLPL2: Nothing. Most of it has just been myself, self-directed.

From a human resource perspective, induction was offered but not specific leadership development or preparation as one human resource manager said:

HRM3: We have induction but in terms of leadership training, no, nothing.

In terms of how institutions support leadership development of middle level professional leaders, all the participants agreed that their departments provide at least one leadership development workshop/training event. This event took place only immediately after their appointments as middle level professional leaders. The
leadership development programme usually involved external experts and the most frequently identified forms of leadership development were; mentoring, coaching, workshops, 360-degree feedback, building communities of practice and on-the-job training. One middle level professional leader spoke on the leadership development programme she had undergone and stated:

MLPL1: I attended a leadership development workshop that was offered in {year} for all new {position} and the team leaders for {administration}.

Three middle level professional leaders talked about the challenge of taking up professional development- that without temporary assistance from the organisation to manage their workload, it was difficult to use the professional development time and financial support made available to them. Financial support was identified as a barrier to fulfilling leadership development requirements. As one middle level professional leader commented:

MLPL3: it comes down to the budget and whether there is a budget for us to attend.

While there is support for professional development, support for leadership development is not specific (except for the one event) and how leadership development is progressed is dependent on the manager’s or organisation’s support for leadership development. The majority of the middle level professional leaders felt that although they had attended at least one leadership development activity, this was not sufficient to their needs as leaders. Three of the middle level professional leaders were in their roles as ‘first time’ middle level professional leaders and openly claimed that they needed more leadership development opportunities.

The findings indicate that no training or development is offered to middle level professional leaders prior to their appointment as leaders. The findings also indicate that even if leaders were appointed to a leadership position for the first time, their
training in leadership development took place after appointment and was inadequate. The key finding reveals that there is a disparity between what middle level professional leaders want in terms of leadership development and what the institution offers.

**Selection criteria for middle level professional leaders**
All six middle level professional leaders and three human resource managers claimed that leadership development was not mentioned specifically in their institutions policies. The participants assumed that leadership development was embedded within the professional development policy but they had not seen it formalised within a policy. The middle level professional leaders felt that there were no guidelines for the selection of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics.

Two middle level professional leaders revealed that they were not aware of the criteria for recruiting people in positions such as themselves. Four middle level professional leaders described having the following as core criteria for how they would select future middle level professional leaders: being able to influence other people, people person, sharing the organisation’s passion, good communicator, implementation of strategy, qualifications, functional and technical expertise, problem solver, interpersonal skills, trust, confidence, analytical, and experience as a leader. For example, as one middle level professional leader stated:

> MLPL6: I would be looking for someone who is stable...level headed...uses common sense and be able to analyse and to be able to investigate, problem solve.

The three human resource managers aligned the selection criteria of middle level professional leaders to the institution’s vision and strategic plan which was a different view from the middle level professional leaders. The human resource managers’ view was that leadership development was an institutional priority and that their
institutions were changing tact in how they approached and offered leadership development. For example, as stated by one human resource manager:

HRM1: One is around the connection with the organisation values so we have a strong set of organisational values and connection with our vision and our strategy so the expectation is, people who go into the role will demonstrate that they’re values-based but also are committed to where the organisational strategic framework. So that will be one part of it. And then the other core part of it is obviously having the technical capability and being able to lead in the area and then probably the third dimension for us which fits with the strategy stuff goes back to what I was saying before about self-leading teams. One who can actually lead into that environment, someone who can come in and run a professional area and that more coaching, facilitative way and still taking leadership of it, accountability for what’s delivered.

There are no clear criteria for the selection of middle level professional leaders and guidelines need to be created on the selection of middle level professional leaders. The key finding revealed that none of the New Zealand polytechnics (from which the middle level professional leaders and human resource managers had participated from) had a specific leadership development policy.

Leadership development practices and experiences of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics
All six middle level professional leaders and three human resource managers agreed that there is no structure in the way leadership development programmes are offered to middle level professional leaders. There is no emphasis on continuity of development and leadership development is ad hoc and self-driven. As one middle level professional leader stated:
MLPL1: There are workshops that you source yourself through the xx and it’s a matter of prioritizing your work load to actually further educate yourself as a manager.

The perception that leadership development is ad hoc and not planned for middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics may stem from the previous finding that there is no specific leadership development policy for middle level professional leaders.

In addition, four middle level professional leaders spoke on improving and strengthening their leadership skills as part of their leadership development practices. They highlighted that improving their skills in communication, interpersonal skills, trust and confidence would enable them to be effective leaders. As one middle level professional leader said:

MLPL2: It’s probably my way of treating people, I believe in treating people as you wish to be treated. It goes a long way like that. And listening to people.

The majority of middle level professional leaders and human resource managers also highlighted the importance of conducting effective performance appraisals and professional development planning for leadership development planning. The majority’s perception was that they had received little or no feedback on their strengths and weaknesses. One middle level professional leader stated:

MLPL2: Over these years, I’ve had three different managers, none of them have given me feedback. I always get a bonus and I get told I do a good job but that’s it. It’s important that we get feedback on our performance.

Professional development planning was raised as a vital component to leadership development planning. In terms of professional development, financial support and assistance with leave has been a prominent feature of the support from the
participants’ institutions however most participants claim that this too is ad hoc and dependent on the manager’s or institution’s support.

The key finding revealed that leadership development of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics is ad hoc and unplanned. There is no structure in how New Zealand polytechnics plan and build their leadership cohorts and the finding also revealed that most middle level professional leaders learnt their roles on-the-job or through trial and error. The finding also highlighted the importance of effective leadership, conducting effective performance appraisals, the importance of human resource management and professional development planning.

**Leadership development needs**
All middle level professional leaders and human resource managers agreed that the needs of middle level professional leaders were based on whether the staff member was externally or internally recruited. Suggestions from all participants were made to nurture internal, aspiring and emerging leaders. As one middle level professional leader suggested:

*MLPL2: I think those that actually show leadership potential need to be nurtured and shown ways to move forward. And also management change, the way they do recruitment is to have a look at internal first before going external.*

One human resource manager identified gaps in leaders as coaches and facilitators and stated the following:

*HRM1: think we’ve still got some gaps around leader as coach, leader as facilitator in our new model.*

Two middle level professional leaders identified time and the support of the organisation as a challenge in enjoying the full benefits of leadership development. One middle professional leader said:
MLPL1: I think they need to allocate the time so even though they’ve given me the role as a team leader and a supervisor they haven’t allowed my time to be the best that I can be and I do find that I spend most of my time on catch up and I don’t get a chance to implement some of the changes or what I’ve learnt in the training like sitting down and coaching the staff because actually I don’t have time for that because some are a bit needier than others. But they just throw it on top of and expect you to do.

Two middle level professional leaders identified gaps in managing and implementing strategy as gaps in current trainings. As noted by one middle level professional leader:

MLPL4: Strategy and how to achieve it. Understanding what strategy is and how to implement it within a team, how to communicate the strategy and vision of the organisation at a lower level. So we have a prospectus and we have an intranet and strategic reports that sit on the intranet however I perceive that leaders’ role to operationalize that. I see a need there for people to learn how can I achieve the vision.

One middle level professional leader stated that it didn’t matter if one had experience as a leader or no experience, it was vital that all middle level professional leaders took up leadership training opportunities after their appointment. She stated:

MLPL3: I think if you are a team leader, new or old, unless you’re experienced, everybody should go through that leadership training programme. It was absolutely fantastic.
The findings showed that there were several needs of middle level professional leaders which ranged from basic leadership training to training around strategic planning and implementation.

The key finding revealed that many middle level professional leaders and human resource managers identified the need and importance of nurturing aspiring and emerging leaders from within the institution as a means of improving the organisation’s overall leadership capability.

**Benefits of leadership development**
Individual benefits were identified by middle level professional leaders and human resource managers that included the notion of effective leadership, enhancing and strengthening aspiring leadership, individual empowerment and confidence, for example as stated by one middle level professional leader:

*MLPL2*: I think with that leadership development it also empowers people at lower levels to have a greater level of responsibility and in that responsibility, they are able to see different opportunities.

For three participants, the benefits of leadership development were linked to the organisation’s success and improvement, as one middle professional leader suggested:

*MLPL3*: If there’s no goal, no vision and without a good leader, people will leave, high turnover and it’s not doing any good to the organisation coz we have to keep hiring people. It’s all connected so it’s really important to have really good leaders.

Findings from this theme revealed that the majority of the participants (five middle level professional leaders) linked the benefits of leadership development to the individual whereas four participants (three human resource managers and one
middle level professional leader) linked the benefits of leadership development to the organisation. Effective leadership was identified to be an important component of leadership development.

Summary
The key findings have been presented according to the three research questions:

1. What is the nature of leadership development in New Zealand polytechnics?
2. What are the institutional commitments to developing middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics?
3. What are the leadership development practices and experiences of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics?

The nature of leadership development in New Zealand polytechnics

The role of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics are split into two major groups of responsibilities; responsibilities related to people and responsibilities related to expertise.

In addition, the key finding reveals that there is confusion in the use of the terms leader development and leadership development with majority of the middle level professional leaders defining leadership development as improving individual capacity and the human resource managers defining leadership development as developing and enhancing the leadership capabilities of their staff with a focus on organisational improvement.

Institutional commitments to developing middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics

The key finding under this research question reveals that there is a disparity between what middle level professional leaders want in terms of leadership development and what the institution offers.
Another key finding revealed that none of the New Zealand polytechnics (from which nine of the interviewees had participated) had a leadership development policy.

**Leadership development practices and experiences of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics**

Under this research question, all middle level professional leaders and human resource managers agreed that leadership development in New Zealand polytechnics is ad hoc and self-driven. There is no prior planning and no emphasis on continuity of leadership development. The six middle level professional leaders and three human resource managers also highlighted the importance of conducting effective performance appraisal, professional development planning and the importance of human resource management in leadership development planning. The most frequently identified forms of leadership development focused on mentoring, formal training workshops, 360-degree feedback, communities of practice and on-the-job training. All middle level professional leaders had participated in one of these forms of leadership development events.

The last key finding revealed that the majority of the middle level professional leaders and human resource managers identified the need and importance of nurturing aspiring and emerging leaders from within the institution as a means of improving the organisation’s overall capability.

The next chapter presents the discussion on the findings with conclusions and recommendations from the study.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction
This chapter discusses the keys findings reported in Chapter Four and discusses the key findings in the context of the literature presented in Chapter Two. The key findings discussed in this chapter are presented under the headings related to the three research questions: the nature of leadership development in New Zealand polytechnics, the institutional commitments to developing middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics and leadership development practices and experiences of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics.

This chapter also provides conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research. It is hoped that the discussion of the findings will contribute to the body of knowledge on leadership development of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics.

Discussion of findings
The nature of leadership development in New Zealand polytechnics
The findings from interviews with six middle level professional leaders and three human resource managers revealed that middle level professional leaders are holding heterogeneous roles that are linked to two principal responsibilities; responsibilities related to people and responsibilities related to expertise. This finding supports research conducted by Clegg and McAuley (2005), and Branson et al. (2015) that the nature of middle level professional leaders’ role in the context of higher education institutions is diverse and complex.

Responsibilities related to people are connected to training staff, managing staff, providing mentoring and support, providing professional guidance, reviewing staff performance, and acting as the liaison between academic and administration staff. The concept of responsibilities related to people is supported by Branson et al.
(2015) who claim that “tasks such as undertaking performance reviews with staff to recognise past achievements and to plan future directions and responsibility to recognise and provide for learning and professional development needs for staff reflect this aspect of middle headship” (p.191). They assert the purpose of middle leadership is to support staff they may be responsible for and despite the view that these tasks provide a context in which learning occurs, very little leadership development is provided in this area which highlights how complex the role is and how vital leadership development is. The notion of responsibilities related to people is similar to Briggs’ (2004) notions of staff manager role. The staff manager role is responsible for people management.

Responsibilities related to expertise are connected to carrying out tasks such as secretarial duties to academic committees, administration support for programmes, student services, finance, human resources, estates, enterprise and external relations (Whitchurch, 2004). Under Briggs’ (2004) perception of middle managers, this area of responsibility connects with Briggs’ (2004) ‘implementer role’ and ‘liaison role’. Briggs’ implementer role is concerned with carrying out tasks that relate to the strategic vision and goals of the institution. Briggs’ (2004) liaison role involves bridging communication between academic and service departments. Busher (2005) and Busher and Harris (1999) advocate that one of the major responsibilities of middle leaders is to act as liaisons between management and staff. This is also what is termed by Marshall (2012) as ‘meat in the sandwich’ which reflects how middle level professional leaders are often caught between trying to serve the interests of academic staff and non-academic staff. This view is also supported by Thomas-Gregory (2014) who states that “middle managers are responsible for the operational work of others: lecturers, senior lecturers and administrators” (p.623).

In addition, Earley and Bubb (2004) and O’Connor (2008) add to this notion by claiming that middle leaders play a vital role in controlling and influencing the flow of information between academic staff and the senior administrative staff. Rosser (2004) adds that the middle leaders are a vital group of individuals “whose administrative roles and functions support the goals and mission of the academic
enterprise” (p.318). While the work of these authors support this finding, it must be noted that their work in based on the context of academic leadership or middle management and is not specific to middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics.

Another key finding revealed that there is confusion in the use of the terms leader development and leadership development by middle level professional leaders and human resource managers. This is echoed by Dopson, Ferlie, McGivern, Fischer, Ledger, Behrens, and Wilson (2016) who state “leadership development was often seen as synonymous with leader development” (p.7). The majority of the middle level professional leaders have described leadership development as improving individual capacity where the focus is on the individual and the human resource managers have defined leadership development as developing and enhancing the leadership capabilities of their staff where the focus is on organisational improvement.

The literature on leadership development (such as; Cardno, 2012; Van Velsor & McCauley, 2014; and Bush, 2010) identifies the two terms as separate. Allen et al. (as cited in Ardichvili & Manderscheid, 2008) and Day (2001) suggest that leader development is individual development and leadership development “involves interaction between individual leaders and the social-cultural environment in which they function” (p.621). Olivares, Peterson and Hess (2007) claim the development of individuals is not sufficient and that effective leadership must involve the individual’s development being integrated in the context of the institution’s strategies, mission and goals.

Leader development as described by Van Velsor and McCauley (2004) is about developing a person’s capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes whereas in leadership development, the focus is on developing the capacity of an institution as a group. The notion of leader development as explained by Van Velsor and McCauley (2004) is what majority of the middle level professional leaders in this study have described. Allen et al. (as cited in Ardichvili & Manderscheid, 2008)
further defined leadership development as a process of expanding an organisation’s capacity to generate leadership potential within the organisation to achieve organisational goals. Therefore, Allen et al. (as cited in Ardichvili & Manderscheid, 2008) suggest that leader development is individual level development, whereas leadership development involves interaction between individual leaders and the social–cultural environment in which they function in.

Dopson et al. (2016) explain the difference between leader and leadership development very well when they state:

“Leader development” is associated with the development of the organisation’s “human capital” (i.e. development of individual skills, knowledge and abilities) whereas “leadership development” is associated with the development of its “social capital” (which is about building networked relationships among multiple individuals, leading to improvements in organisational effectiveness). (p.36).

This lack of clarity on the terminology of leader and leadership development is problematic. If effective leadership is vital for the overall success of an organisation and the pathway to effective leadership is through leadership development, then the correct terminology must be correctly and homogeneously understood by middle level professional leaders and human resource personnel so that professional development opportunities that are identified and planned for have a specific purpose. If the purpose is to develop individuals, then the focus on the organisation is lost. Leadership development binds people together for a common purpose-to improve the organisation’s capability in achieving its vision and goals. If an organisation is serious about developing a cohort of leaders to achieve its vision and goals, then leadership development and leader development must be clarified and understood by those who are responsible for carrying out tasks and those who are meant to be driving leadership development.
Institutional commitments to developing middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics

A key finding under this theme revealed that there is a disparity between what middle level professional leaders want in terms of leadership development and what the institution offers. Two middle level professional leaders did not have any expectations around their leadership development whilst one middle level professional leader and one human resource manager highlighted the need to obtain a post graduate qualification for career progression. The majority of the middle level leaders and human resource managers revealed that they wanted mentorship and coaching from their managers, more time and funding to dedicate to leadership development as well as temporary assistance with personnel to cover their roles while they undertook leadership development activities. All participants revealed that although they have been offered professional development opportunities, it was difficult to take up professional development unless adequate cover for their roles was arranged.

In addition, the middle level professional leaders' view is that there is no leadership development activity offered prior to their appointment as a middle level professional leader. The human resource perception offered induction as the only form of leadership development activity offered prior to appointment. This contrasts with what Bush (2012) advocates for, that leadership learning should take place prior to appointment. After appointment, the most frequently identified forms of leadership development taken up by middle level professional leaders were mentoring, coaching, workshops, 360-degree feedback, communities of practice and on-the-job training.

The majority of the middle level professional leaders were in favour of mentoring as the preferred model for leadership development. Chang et al. (2014) advocate for mentoring as the most important tool for leadership development. This is similar to Drago-Severson's (2012) model on leadership development which draws on the adult development theory and promotes the notion that for leaders to help others grow, these leaders need to understand their own capacities. Ramsden’s (1998)
claims around personal leadership as the most effective form of leadership development echoes the claims made by Chang et al. (2014) and Drago-Severson’s (2012) where the focus is on the individual and contradicts those who claim that leadership development is about institutional improvement (rather than individual). Wallace and Marchant (2009) state that “the benefits of mentoring in higher education are not limited to the mentee. Mentors reported improved networks, satisfaction from assisting others’ development, connection to the wider university agenda and improved interpersonal skills” (p.793). The views of Wallace and Marchant are supported by the majority of the middle level professional leaders.

Inman (2009) supports the notion of on-the-job learning by suggesting that those leaders who were the most prepared were those who had progressed internally, taking on various leadership roles within their institutions and who had on the way, acquired knowledge and skills relevant to facing leadership challenges. Inman also supports the notion that on-the-job learning can be powerful but is also inefficient “unless it is followed up by formal, systematic opportunities to conceptualise the effect of this experience” (p.427). Bratton and Gold (1999) stress that, while some individuals might receive opportunities for development programmes while moving between jobs or institutions, most individuals learn on-the-job, “informally, by accident or incidentally through experience and practice” (p.35). Inman (2009) adds that mentoring, coaching, networking and experience are the four key elements as the most useful form of learning.

The notion of building communities of practice, similar to the notion of building networks, is supported by Pepper and Giles (2015) and Mårtensson and Roxå (2016). As Pepper and Giles (2015) state “meeting with others in similar roles enabled them to better understand the many facets of their role, to share ideas and to discuss alternative solutions to issues they faced” (p.50). These authors claim that the idea of communities of practice or networking allows middle level professional leaders to meet other middle level professional leaders and enhance their development through sharing of common practices.
While the six middle level professional leaders claimed they had attended at least one leadership development activity in their role, they felt that this was not adequate to meeting the needs of their evolving heterogeneous roles as middle level professional leaders the polytechnics they worked in. The human resource managers also supported the view that although leadership development opportunities were offered to middle level professional leaders, this was inadequate in meeting the needs of middle level professional leaders in becoming effective leaders. These findings are resonant in the work of Adey (2000) and Harris, Busher and Wise (2003) who argue that middle managers have not been trained appropriately for their roles. Whilst there are many leadership development activities that are available and tailor-made to academic leaders in New Zealand polytechnics, there is no programme specifically available to middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics (from which the nine interviewees participated from).

Another key finding revealed by the six middle level professional leaders and three human resource managers was that none of the institutions had a specific leadership development policy. There is no structure in how the institutions engage and plan to build its cohort of leaders. The majority of the middle level professional leaders’ perceptions indicated that there is no strict criteria or guidelines for the selection of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics and if there were some criteria, they were not aware of it. The majority of the middle level professional leaders listed the following competencies as core criteria on how they would select future middle level professional leaders; being able to influence other people, people person, sharing the organisation’s passion, good communicator, implementation of strategy, qualifications, functional and technical expertise, problem solver, interpersonal skills, trust, confidence, analytical and experience as a leader.

The human resource view was unlike the middle level professional leaders as the three human resource managers claimed that their institutions’ guidelines for the selection of middle level professional leaders were aligned with the institution’s needs as per their goals and strategic plan. This indicates that while institutions
might have a strategic plan (note, not policy) for the appointment of its middle level professional leaders, middle level professional leaders are unaware of this.

Much of the literature (see for example; Bush, 2011; Bryman, 2007; Robinson et al., 2009) on effective leadership refer to the importance of setting strategic goals and a vision for the institution. Leader (2004) and Pasmore’s (2014) argument (although not specific to educational institutions) is that without an explicit leadership strategy, an organisation will not have the leadership talent they require. Pasmore (2014) further adds that “once the leadership strategy is known, a leadership development strategy can be formulated to produce the desired future state, and implications for talent management processes can be identified” (p.4). Pasmore’s (2014) claims hold true for the finding highlighted above as with a policy or strategy, the institution will be committed to investing their time and resources in creating leaders based on the leadership development programmes they have and need. Hall (2009) sums up this finding well when she states “all organisations need a clear idea of where they wish to go, how they wish to develop and a route map for getting there. This usually results in a series of strategies. HEIs - as large complex organisations - are no different in this respect” (p.10).

Leadership development practices and experiences of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics

The findings under this theme revealed that all participants in this study agreed that leadership development of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics is ad hoc and unplanned. There is no prior planning and no emphasis on continuity of development and highlights that middle level professional leaders learnt their role on-the-job or through trial and error. This may be the result of the earlier finding, that New Zealand polytechnics have no specific policy for leadership development. The finding also highlighted the importance of effective leadership, performance appraisal, professional development planning and the vital role of human resource management to leadership development. Inman (2009) supports the revelation that leadership development has been ad hoc and unplanned. This finding is contrary to what Bush (2010) suggests that leadership in education is a specific occupation that requires specific preparation. Bush (2010) emphasises that
leadership development should be planned to enable the best possible leadership outcomes. Whilst what Bush suggests sounds good in theory, in reality, most leadership development events take place because of individual choices.

Hempsall (2014) supports this reality by adding that there is inconsistency in preparation for leadership roles in higher education. Hempsall (2014) further adds that there is strong support for the need to do things differently at the individual level but at the organisational level, the culture, systems and mechanisms in place largely appear to maintain the status quo. Avolio’s (as cited in Bush, 2012) notion of leaders are ‘made not born’ leads to a view that systematic preparation rather than unplanned experience is more likely to produce effective leaders. Brown (2001) maintains that “leadership development is an underutilised strategy at most universities” (p.312) and fits well with this finding.

Various studies (see for example, Bryman, 2007; Cardno, 2014; Brown, 2001; Ramsden, 1998) confirm that effective leadership is vital in all organisations. The notion of effective leadership as being important to institutions was highlighted by all the middle level professional leaders that were interviewed. The middle level professional leaders felt that strengthening and enhancing their leadership skills (such as; communication, interpersonal skills building trust and confidence) would enable them to be effective leaders.

The importance of human resource management within the leadership development frame was also highlighted as a vital component. Human resource managers were included in this study to provide their perspective on and involvement in leadership development within the higher education context. While no reference was specifically made to human resource management by the middle level professional leaders, responses from the human resource managers indicated that they plan an extremely important role in the implementation of an institution’s strategic plans on leadership development. Literature (for example; Cardno, 2012; Rudman, 2002; Sarip & Royo, 2014) identifies the focus of human resource management as strategic. From a
human resource management lens, leadership development is an investment in people to enhance and achieve an organisation’s strategic plans. And the development of people falls under the scope of human resource management (Aon Hewiit, 2012).

The notion of effective performance appraisals was also raised by the majority of the middle level professional leaders as a key element in improving effective leadership. More than half of the middle level professional leaders felt that their performance appraisals involved their managers providing them with little or no feedback on their strengths and weaknesses. Cardno (2012) reiterates that performance appraisal should be a developmental and on-going process however the reality is that performance appraisal is conducted ad hoc and as a tick-box exercise. If performed well, performance appraisal can be an effective platform for identifying leadership development opportunities that middle level professional leaders espouse to.

Professional development was also raised by the majority of the middle level professional leaders in this study as an important element to leadership development planning. The middle level professional leaders who raised the concept of professional development highlighted the need for professional development to identify areas they could improve in as part of their improvement in leadership effectiveness. Cardno (2012) explains that performance appraisal should inform professional development as if we knew how well we are performing our roles then we might be able to identify areas in our performance that could be improved. The notion of professional development is also linked to the responsibilities held by middle level professional leaders in relation to promoting the development of the staff they manage.

However, in terms of practice in the New Zealand context, Cardno (2012) identified two ineffective approaches to professional development; (1) the smorgasbord approach - where there is a budget allocated and staff choose from a range of events, and (2) do-it-all approach - where institutions respond to all training
opportunities. Both approaches support the notion highlighted by the middle level professional leaders who were interviewed that professional development, like leadership development, is ad hoc and unplanned. This contradicts Cooper and Boice-Pardee (2011) assertion that middle level professional leaders are responsible for their own professional development and growth. However, the finding resonated with the claims of Wallace and Marchant (2009) and Rosser (2004) who argue that professional and career development is vital to middle managers.

The final key finding revealed that majority of the middle level professional leaders and all the human resource managers recognised the importance of identifying and nurturing aspiring and emerging middle level professional leaders from within the institution as a means of improving the organisation’s overall capability and as a means of increasing staff retention. This finding is echoed in the work of Bush and Jackson (as cited in Bush, 2010) who note that aspiring leaders should be identified for preparation for leadership positions.

Ardichvili and Manderscheid (2008) introduce another concept of leader preparation; the notion of leader assimilation- “leader assimilation is an early leadership development intervention intended to help new leaders adapt to their work teams” (p.625). This new idea of leader assimilation involves an external party meeting with the leader’s team shortly after the appointment of the leader and asking for the team’s feedback on the leader. The external party then meets with the leader and provides feedback from the team to the leader in a one-on-one session. After the one-on-one session, the external party and leader meet with the team and the leader speaks to the team about their feedback. Ardichvili and Manderscheid (2008) state that “leader assimilations are promising interventions for future research and early leadership development” (p.625). Leader assimilation, although not widely tested, can be used as one method of introducing aspiring or emerging leaders to the work on leadership development and improving their overall leadership capabilities.
Conclusions
This qualitative study grew from my curiosity related to my experiences in various leadership positions in a New Zealand polytechnic. In these various positions, I received some training opportunities but none were specific to leadership development. I assumed that middle level professional leaders in other New Zealand polytechnics might share similar experiences. This study was conducted with middle level professional leaders and human resource managers in New Zealand polytechnics to gain different perspectives of the nature of leadership development, institutional commitments to leadership development and experiences and practices of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics.

A conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics are expected to carry out leadership responsibilities without adequate leadership development at both the individual and organisational level. The study shows that that middle level professional leaders play a complex and vital role that is fraught with challenges. The administrative role middle level professional leaders’ play enables academics to carry out their specialist roles but it is a role that is poorly defined. This study has clarified that the role has a people management dimension and an administration expertise dimension and both involve leading others.

An implication for the organisation is that if people carrying out these professional roles are not supported through leadership development then they may not be achieving their full potential and may not be as effective as they could be. Individuals performing middle level professional leadership roles need targeted leadership development that attends to their personal needs. This is the notion of ‘leader development’ that is concerned with growing the leadership capability of individuals (see for example: Van Velsor & McCauley, 2004; Day, 2001; Bush, 2010; Cardno, 2012). However, this itself is not sufficient because the concept of ‘leadership development’ is also highlighted as being absent in the polytechnic sector in this study. When an organisation recognises the importance of developing leadership...
across all levels of the organisation, then every level of leadership benefits. Polytechnic leaders at the senior level should be aware of the importance of both leader and leadership development to realise the potential benefits this could bring.

Another conclusion from this study is that because there is no clear policy and strategic direction for leadership development in New Zealand polytechnics, there will always be a gap in leadership effectiveness within the organisation. If middle level professional leaders are to take their leadership role seriously, they need to know that it will be recognised in effective performance appraisal and professional development processes and therefore given credit via a formalised policy within the institution. Effective performance appraisals and professional development planning processes are crucial to the leadership development process. If human resource management played its role effectively, and performance appraisals and professional development planning processes are conducted effectively, then gaps in individual and organisational leadership can be identified, planned for and worked towards. This means that disparities in what middle level professional leaders want and need in terms of leadership development and what the organisation offers can be reduced. This also means that aspiring and emergent leaders can be identified within these processes that Bush and Jackson (as cited in Bush, 2010) argue are vital for leadership positions.

An implication for the organisation is that without a clear policy on leadership development, middle level professional leaders are clueless as to the direction in which the organisation is heading in terms of leadership. A further implication of this research relates to the concern that whilst there may be strategic plans developed by Human Resource Managers on leadership development, middle level professional leaders are unaware of these strategic plans. Therefore, these strategic plans need to be translated to middle level professional leaders so that they are aware of the institutions vision and goals on leadership development. The leadership development policy (and plans) needs to be linked to the policies on performance appraisal and professional development so that all these elements are working in sync to achieve effective leadership. Effective leadership after all, is what most
authors (such as: Bryman, 2007; Brown, 2001; Inman, 2009) argue is essential for organisational success.

Lastly, it can be concluded from this study that it is vital to create and provide a tailor-made leadership development programme for middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics. Current programmes for leadership development events are tailor-made to academics and this study highlights the gap in the literature on leadership development of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics. Middle level professional leaders require leadership development programmes that identify their professional learning needs, provide them with opportunities to develop their leadership practice and offers them a supportive learning environment.

The notion of building ‘communities of practice’ for middle level professional leaders has been mooted by majority of the middle level professional leaders as an opportunity and avenue to share and build on similar leadership experiences and is also supported by authors such as Pepper and Giles (2015), Hammersley-Fletcher and Kirkham and Mårtensson and Roxå (2016). Equipping middle level professional leaders with leadership skills and knowledge is critical if they are to positively influence the work of academics and therefore continue to make a positive impact on student learning outcomes (Rosser, 2004) which is essentially what educational institutions are set up for.

**Recommendations**
The findings of this study have led to the development of four recommendations that may be relevant to any New Zealand polytechnic. Even though this is a small-scale study, readers may choose to take these recommendations, and make generalisations that can be applied within their own context.

- That New Zealand polytechnics formulate specific leadership development policies to allow strategic plans to be formulated around leadership development and that these plans are connected to performance appraisals
and professional development planning to identify and foster leadership development.

- That senior leaders in New Zealand polytechnics work with the Human Resource team to conduct an audit of leadership development activities available for middle level professional leaders and the Human Resource team devise a plan for leadership development across the organisation that is tailor-made for middle level professional leaders.

- That middle level professional leaders’ source leadership development opportunities both from within and outside their organisations to enhance their knowledge and skills about effective leadership.

- That middle level professional leaders create communities of practice within their polytechnics and expand and build on these communities of practice across New Zealand to create a space for sharing and building on similar practices.

Limitations of the study
One limitation of this study is that, due to the sample size, the results of this study cannot be representative of all middle level professional leaders in the New Zealand polytechnic sector. Readers of this study will need to consider the extent to which the findings and conclusions from this study can be applied to their own context (Cohen et al., 2007).

Another limitation of this study is the time-frame of nine months that was allocated to this study was short. I moved to a new country two months after my research proposal was approved and the challenges of moving to a new country coupled with having to transcribe the interviews immediately, juggling the demands of a new job, a lack of regular access to regular electricity and internet (after my new home country was affected by a category 5 cyclone) affected the time I could allocate to this study.
Suggestions for future research
This research has highlighted possibilities for future research. These possibilities include:

• A more in-depth study exploring leadership development practices and experiences of middle level professional leaders across a larger sample of New Zealand polytechnics; and
• Research into the leadership effectiveness of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics.
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview schedule

Title: Exploring the nature of leadership development of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics.

Date of interview: _______________________

Number of Interviewee: ___________

Middle level professional leader (MLPL) or Human resource manager (HRM)

# of years of experience as a MLPL or HRM

Definition of terms:
For the purpose of this proposed study, the terms ‘middle level professional leaders’ have been coined by the researcher to reflect those below the small group of top strategic managers and above first-level supervision who are not on an academic contract in the New Zealand polytechnic context.

Questions

1. What is your role and title in the organisation?
2. What are your leadership development practices as a middle level professional leader in this organisation?
3. What are your leadership development experiences as a middle level professional leader in this organisation?
4. What do you expect as a leader regarding your own development?
5. What is your understanding of leadership development?
6. How is leadership development reflected in your organisation’s policy?
7. How does your organisation support leadership development of middle level professional leaders?
8. What types of leadership development training or programmes does your organisation offer to aspiring leaders prior to their appointments as middle level professional leaders?
9. What types of leadership development training or programmes does your organisation offer to aspiring leaders after their appointments as middle level professional leaders?
10. What do you see as the leadership development needs of middle level professional leaders in your organisation?
11. What are the benefits of leadership development?
12. What are the core selection criteria that your organisation uses to select middle level professional staff to participate in leadership development?
13. What additional criteria do you think the organisation should consider when selecting staff to participate in leadership development?

Any further comments?
Appendix 2: Information sheet for participants

Research Project Title: Exploring the nature of leadership development of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics

My name is Shirleen Ali 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 assistance in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree. The aim of my research project is to explore the nature of leadership development of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics. I intend to investigate institutional commitment to developing middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics as well as examine leadership development practices and experiences of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics.

I will be collecting data by conducting interviews that will take no more than 60 minutes. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Interviews will be conducted face-to-face in New Zealand at a mutually agreed location during work hours. Where the researcher is unable to travel, the researcher will use voice recording and electronic software (such as Skype) to interview participants. Your organisation will be approached for consent and the results may be published however the data will only be used in my thesis in which neither you nor your organisation will be identified. I will be handing out this information sheet, (organisation permission form, if applicable) and the questions for the interviews. I will be recording your contribution, transcribe and will provide a transcript for you to check before data analysis is undertaken. You will be provided with a copy of the interview transcript to
check for accuracy and will be asked to verify this within a week of receipt of the transcript.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This does not stop you from changing your mind if you wish to withdraw from the research. Due to time constraints for the research project, you may withdraw yourself or any information that has been provided for this project within two weeks after receipt of the transcript from the researcher.

Your name, organisation name and information that may identify you will be kept completely confidential. All information collected from you will be stored on a password protected file and only you, my supervisor and I will have access to this information.

Please contact us if you need more information about the project. At any time if you have any concerns about the research project you can contact my supervisor: My supervisor is Professor Carol Cardno, phone 815-4321 ext. 8406 or email ccardno@unitec.ac.nz.

**UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (2015-1067)**

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from October 30th 2015 to October 31st 2016. 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 8551). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix 3: Participant consent form

Research Project Title: Exploring the nature of leadership development of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research and I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that everything I say is confidential and none of the information I give will identify me or my organisation and that the only persons who will know what I have said will be the researcher and her supervisor. I also understand that I will be provided with a transcript of the interview for verification and that I may withdraw myself or any information that has been provided for this project within two weeks after receipt of the transcript from the researcher.

I also understand that all the information that I give will be stored securely on a computer at Unitec for a period of ten years.

I understand that my discussion with the researcher will be taped and transcribed.

I understand that I can see the finished research document.

I have had time to consider everything and I give my consent to be a part of this project.

Participant Name: .......................................................... ..........................................................

Participant email address: .......................................................... ..........................................................

Participant Signature: ........................................ Date: ..........................................................

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (2015-1067)

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from October 30th 2015 to October 31st 2016. 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 8551). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Full name of author: Shirleen Aziza Ali

Full title of thesis:
Exploring the nature of leadership development of middle level professional leaders in New Zealand polytechnics

Degree: Master of Educational Leadership and Management
Year of presentation: 2016

I agree to my thesis being lodged in the Unitec Library (including being available for inter-library loan), provided that due acknowledgement of its use is made. I consent to copies being made in accordance with the Copyright Act 1994.

and

I agree that a digital copy may be kept by the Library and uploaded to the institutional repository and be viewable worldwide.

Signature of author: [Signature]

Date: 30 November 2016
Shirleen Ali

Library form at the end of thesis