Middle Leaders’ Decision Making About Staff Development in New Zealand Secondary Schools

Vincenza Golding

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

Unitec Institute of Technology 2017
DECLARATION

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This Thesis Project entitled: Middle Leaders’ Decision Making About Staff Development in New Zealand Secondary Schools

is submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements for the Unitec degree of

Masters in Educational Leadership and Management

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Candidate’s declaration

I confirm that:

- This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project 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: 2017-1021

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ABSTRACT

The role and responsibilities of middle leaders in New Zealand secondary schools have evolved over the last two decades. One additional responsibility for middle leaders is professionally developing their teaching staff. Traditionally, this has been the role of principals, however, middle leaders have been delegated this responsibility due to the expansion of demands placed upon principals in secondary schools. Middle leaders have responsibility for the organisation of their departments, as well as a significant teaching load. Therefore, the addition of extra responsibility to professionally develop staff has significantly impacted on their workload. Whilst literature exists which examines the role and responsibilities of middle leaders, there is very little literature about the specific role of middle leaders in developing their team. This study examined the role middle leaders play in the professional development of their teaching staff.

An interpretive approach was adopted for this qualitative study. The study involved the use of two research methods. The first method employed was semi-structured interviews which was used to attain the viewpoint from the middle leaders’ perspective. The second method, focus group interviews were undertaken to attain the viewpoint from the teachers’ perspective.

The findings of this study highlight that professional learning and development is an essential aspect within schools to improve practice, knowledge, and capability within the classroom. However, senior leaders often made assumptions on the most appropriate school wide professional development needs for their teachers. Middle leaders lacked confidence to make professional learning decisions for staff and were often challenged with the idea of responsibility and accountability for professional development of staff.

This research recommends that that principals, senior leaders and teachers develop a common understanding of how professional development is implemented. In addition, it is vital that senior school leaders support their middle leaders in implementing professional development within their teaching teams.
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ABBREVIATIONS

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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>HODS</td>
<td>Heads of Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOFs</td>
<td>Heads of Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAMAR</td>
<td>School Management System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PB4L</td>
<td>Positive Behaviour for Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>Professional Learning</td>
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<td>SLT</td>
<td>Senior Leadership Team</td>
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The role and responsibilities of a middle leader in New Zealand secondary schools have evolved over time and are dependent on the school and environment. One significant change has been the responsibility for developing staff. The New Zealand Ministry of Education (2013) professional standards give secondary school principals and boards the responsibility to “ensure staff members engage in professional learning” (p. 2). Historically, this had been the role of principals, but over time middle leaders have been delegated this responsibility due to the expansion of demands placed upon secondary school principals (Wylie, 2011). Middle leaders have the responsibility for the organisation of their departments, as well as a significant teaching load. Therefore, the responsibility to professionally develop staff has impacted significantly on their workload. My thesis aims to address a gap in the literature on the specific role of middle leaders in developing their teams.

RESEARCH RATIONALE

My research focus has emerged from my own experience, interest and frustration as a middle leader in a New Zealand secondary school. In my current role as Head of Faculty in a central Auckland integrated girls school, with a staff of five I have the responsibility to manage and lead my faculty, including making decisions on professional development. I have had minimal training as a middle leader, and when making decisions on professional development of my staff, I have not always felt confident with those decisions typically drawing on my prior knowledge and experiences. Although I accept that leading learning is an important aspect of my middle leader role, I do not view this a high priority because of time stresses and the competing demands of the role. This is what promoted me to undertake this research.

In the New Zealand secondary school context, Cardno and Robson (2016) describe the middle manager role as “teachers who take on extra responsibilities such as
leading a subject department or year level within the school" (p. 230). My research focuses specifically on Head of Faculty (HOF) and Head of Department (HOD) roles, and not on Deputy Principal (DP) or Assistant Principal (AP) roles because of my background and what I have experienced.

**Understanding the middle leader role**

In secondary schools, middle leaders are critical in managing and leading pedagogical learning within their teams (Cardno & Bassett, 2015). Gurr and Drysdale (2013) describe middle leaders as people with “formal responsibilities and duties of leadership and management and sit between senior leadership and teachers” (p. 57). Due to the increasing demands of principals’ roles, it is middle leaders who are expected to improve teacher pedagogy and raise the achievement of students within their teams (Ministry of Education, 2012). However, the challenge for middle leaders is to “move beyond the managerial aspects of the role to engage more with teaching and learning” (Dinham, 2007, p. 64) and accept this addition to their role. While middle leaders are trying to adapt to these role expectations, there is “no evidence of any increase in their assumption of responsibility for the professional development of their department staff” (Adey, 2000, p. 426).

Some leaders within schools may not be ‘natural’ leaders, or not have expectations placed upon them or organisational support to be a leader, resulting in minimal understanding or skills for leading staff development within a team (Gurr & Drysdale, 2013). Due to a lack of leadership development and training for middle leaders to develop the skills which enable them to fulfil their role with confidence within a team (Adey, 2000; Bassett, 2016; Dinham, 2007) middle leaders can be challenged with the increased complexity of their changing role and are often under-prepared for the interpersonal aspects of the role.

Developing staff is an important aspect of leadership. Bolam (2002) proposes that professional development is widely accepted as a crucial element to support the improvement of an organisation’s performance. Cardno (2012) and Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, and Fung (2007) discuss the importance of developing staff professionally because of its impact on the way students learn. Therefore, it is important to
understand the complex role of a middle leader and how they support staff in their teams to develop whilst facing challenges and the tension between collegiality and accountability (Bassett, 2016). The challenges of limited time, lack of professional development for middle leaders and the increased pressure within the middle leaders’ role have been identified in a number of studies (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2006; Grootenboer, Edwards-Groves, & Ronnerman, 2015; Irvine & Brundrett, 2016; Thorpe & Bennett-Powell, 2014). These challenges contribute to the decisions made about staff development (Bassett, 2016; Dinham, 2007; Grootenboer et al., 2015; Irvine & Brundrett, 2016). The expectations placed on middle leaders to lead learning while also having a significant teaching load often impacts on middle leaders not being as proactive within their teams as they would like (Irvine & Brundrett, 2016). As a result, the decisions on professional development made by middle leaders are often reactive, rather than proactive (Irvine & Brundrett, 2016). Due to the increased complexity and demands of their role, middle leaders can take on a ‘bunker mentality’ through failing to monitor, evaluate and identify the development needs of staff (Adey, 2000; Dinham, 2007; Irvine & Brundrett, 2016).

More time, resources, spaces to share practice, and the need for middle leadership training to develop skills are some ways suggested within the literature to reduce the stress and anxiety for middle leaders to perform their role (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2006; Grootenboer et al., 2015; Irvine & Brundrett, 2016; Thorpe & Bennett-Powell, 2014). There is also a wide literature on middle leaders and their role, and challenges they face. This research is worth pursuing because there is little literature available about the specific roles of middle leaders in the developing of their team. Therefore, the benefits of this research will be for all middle leaders to improve the effectiveness within their role of leading learning within their team; for middle leaders to fully understand the middle leaders’ role in leading learning and the acceptance of their role changes which have occurred over time. Reducing the knowledge gaps and improving understanding of the middle leader’s role in leading teacher learning would be of benefit for all middle leaders to not only improve their own practice but to also ensure they are making informed and valid decisions on the professional development of their staff.
RESEARCH AIMS AND QUESTIONS

Research aims
The purpose of this study was to investigate middle leaders' decision-making about staff development in New Zealand secondary schools, to add to the knowledge base on middle leadership,

Research aims
The aims of this research were:

1. To examine the expectations of middle leaders in developing staff.
2. To investigate the practices of staff development decision-making employed by middle leaders in secondary schools.
3. To explore the challenges of middle leader decisions for developing staff.

Research questions
The research centred on three key research questions:

1. What are the expectations of middle leaders in developing staff in secondary schools?
2. How do middle leaders and teachers make decisions about staff development?
3. What are the staff development challenges for middle leaders and how can their practices be improved?
THESIS ORGANISATION

This thesis is divided into five chapters.

Chapter One
Introduces the research topic and outlines the research rationale, aims, key questions, and organisation of the thesis.

Chapter Two
Examines and critically reviews the literature from New Zealand and International research on middle leaders’ decision-making about staff professional development in secondary schools.

Chapter Three
Outlines and justifies the research methodology. The two data collection methods used - semi-structured interviews and focus groups - are described. Factors relating to data analysis, maximising reliability, validity, triangulation and establishing ethical considerations are discussed.

Chapter Four
Outlines the findings from individual and focus group interviews with a total of eight teachers in two large New Zealand secondary schools. The findings provide an overview of the main themes that emerged from the interviews: ‘Professional Learning and Development’, ‘The Role Middle Leader in Developing Staff’ and ‘The Challenges for Middle Leaders in Developing Staff’. This three-part chapter analyses findings first from the teacher focus group interviews, then the individual middle leader interviews, and concludes with aggregated findings from the middle leader’s perspective and the teachers’ perspectives.

Chapter Five
Synthesises the findings from teachers’ and middle leaders’ perspectives with the relevant literature from Chapter two, draws conclusions and makes some key recommendations for practice.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is to examine and critically review the literature relating to middle leaders’ decision-making about staff professional development in New Zealand secondary schools. The concept of middle leadership has been discussed by a number of theorists, with diverse definitions. At its most simplistic, middle leadership is suggested by Grootenboer, Edwards-Groves, and Ronnerman (2015) to involve “those who have an acknowledged position of leadership in their educational institution but also have a significant teaching role”, who “can be seen as those who sit between the principal or the head and the teaching staff” (p. 509). In a New Zealand secondary school context, Cardno and Robson (2016) describe the role as “teachers who take on extra responsibilities such as leading a subject department or year level within the school” (p. 230). The roles and responsibilities of a middle leader have evolved over the years depending on aspects of the school and environment, for example, who is responsible for developing staff in a secondary school? The Ministry of Education (2012) refers to the purpose and responsibilities of middle and senior leader roles as “leading and participating in professional development so that it becomes accepted practice in the school” (p. 8).

This literature review focuses on the expectations of the middle leader to develop staff, the practices employed for that purpose and the challenges a middle leader faces in making decisions for developing staff. Key themes emerging from the literature include: professional learning and development; the role of a middle leader in developing staff; and the challenges for a middle leader in developing staff.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Professional learning and development is proposed by Bolam (2002) as a crucial element to support the improvement of an organisation’s performance. He argues that professional development is a key task of management and leadership, “being central
to the way principals manage schools” (p.106). Fitzgerald and Gunter (2006) describe leadership of teacher learning as the “pivotal” role of a middle leader (p. 8). They argue that leading learning within a school at any level involves: influencing and working collaboratively with others; encouraging risk and innovation within a supportive environment; and placing learning at the centre of any activity. Grootenboer et al. (2015) refer to key middle leader practices as “managing and facilitating”, which includes the administrative dimensions of the role as well as facilitating development opportunities for staff (p. 516). Bolam (2002) further describes professional development as an ongoing process of education, training, learning, and support activities undertaken by teachers and leaders. This process can take place either internally or externally, with its primary aim being to promote the learning and development of professional knowledge, skills and values (Bolam, 2002). Cardno (2012) views professional development as a “corollary of performance appraisal” (p. 98). She believes it is important for staff to know how well they are carrying out their job and can assess how well students are learning, while they should be in a position to identify their own (teachers) areas of performance that may need to be improved. The result of this development process can help teachers and leaders recognise and implement valued change in teaching and leadership behaviours, which will lead to more effective education of students and achieve an agreed balance between the needs of the individual, the organisation and the nation.

**The value of professional development**

Cardno (2012) proposes that the development of people is influenced by educational leaders and can improve the effectiveness of an organisation by holistically harnessing professional development potential. Cardno (2012) highlights two ineffective approach examples, in which professional development is either viewed as a must, due to budgets, or is seen as an add-on. The first example she discusses is the “smorgasbord” approach whereby there is a budget set aside within the school and the staff are able to choose from the wide variety of professional development programmes offered.
The second example is the ‘do-it-all’ approach, characterised by the belief that schools should make the most of all opportunities for professional development (Cardno, 2012). Increasingly, professional development in education is offered by a wide range of providers, such as consultants, both national and international, Ministry personnel, universities and training colleges. The way in which professional development within a school is monitored and delivered is essential to ensure the professional development provided meets the identified needs of both the individual and the organisation.

**Developing staff professionally**

Both Cardno (2012) and Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, and Fung (2007) discuss the importance of developing staff professionally and that doing so can have a substantial impact on the way students learn. The scope of professional development should cater for teachers and managers; it should meet both school-wide and individual needs and be linked to the achievement of strategic goals. According to Cardno (2012), a balanced professional development programme should feature school development, curriculum development, management development, and personal development.

Timperley et al. (2007) identify seven important elements for promoting professional learning and discuss the ways in which those elements can impact positively on student learning. The seven elements identified are: extending time for opportunities to learn; the use of external expertise; voluntary participation in learning; challenging current thinking; opportunities to belong to a community of practice; alignment with research and policy; and lastly, having an active school leadership participating in professional development. Thorpe and Bennett-Powell (2014) suggest coaching and mentoring are rated highly by both middle and senior leaders as a method of development. They discuss the importance of professional development and training not being delivered as a “one size fits all” approach, due to differences in individual needs (p. 56). Gurr and Drysdale (2013) place importance on middle leaders being responsible for ensuring they develop their own leadership prior to developing the performance of others, as many middle leaders may have no training or development prior to being appointed to those positions or even feel it is not a necessity. Gurr and
Drysdale suggest that the “lack of professional preparation and leadership development by individual middle leaders” contributes to making a difference within a school (p. 67), thus placing high importance upon middle leadership development as well as staff development to improve pedagogical practice within a school.

**A middle leader’s role in developing staff**

Not all middle leaders acknowledge the importance of their role in the professional development of staff, or have the knowledge and skills required to perform the tasks. Adey (2000) proposes that, despite the fact that not all middle leaders fulfil this role, there is a growing acceptance that the changing role of a middle leader includes professional development of staff; however they need support in determining how this is achieved. Cardno and Bassett (2015) discuss the possibility of a disconnect between senior and middle leaders’ understanding of role expectations in relation to developing staff. Although middle leaders, in principle, have the role of leading professional development, it is a role that is not recognised by senior leaders. Therefore, senior leaders may not provide middle leaders with relevant professional development in order to undertake development with their staff. Fitzgerald and Gunter (2006) discuss the importance of leading learning for teachers and identify six essential factors to enable middle leaders to understand and practice how to lead learning, as follows: leading of learning occurs at all levels in a school; a high level of trust, autonomy and respect for the professionalism of teachers is needed; leading learning requires time, resources and building relationships within a professional learning community; care and a school culture of recognising the values of individuals are important; a culture of high expectations and the taking of risks are needed; and engaging in innovative practices within classrooms and with colleagues is essential (p. 6). It is proposed by Fitzgerald and Gunter (2006) that, although principals are essential to teaching and learning within a school, it is the connections that middle leaders develop with teachers that are vital for the leadership of learning role.
THE ROLE OF A MIDDLE LEADER IN DEVELOPING STAFF

Definition of a middle leaders' role

Defining the role and responsibilities of a middle leader is not simple (Gurr & Drysdale, 2013). Both Fitzgerald (2009) and Cardno and Robson (2016) refer to middle leaders as having formal responsibility to manage and lead a department or subject teams, in which management units [salary allowance] are given to recognise the extra duties which are expected to be performed. According to Cardno and Bassett (2015) middle leaders have a dual role, they both teach and manage, defining middle leaders as “key pedagogical leaders” (p. 31). Similarly, Dinham (2007) and Grootenboer et al. (2015) see middle leaders as having a dual role in which teaching is significant. With multiple responsibilities, the role of a middle leader can be viewed as having a greater stress level, as middle leaders influence, provide and sustain quality teaching and learning.

Grootenboer et al. (2015) identify three defining characteristics of middle leadership first, the positioning of middle leaders; between senior management and teaching staff; second their philosophical position, where middle leaders lead from the centre and alongside their peers; and thirdly, where leading is understood and developed through practice.

It is important to establish what distinguishes a middle leader from other roles within the school. At a national level, “Leading from the Middle” (Ministry of Education, 2012) refers to middle leaders as a diverse group with varying needs depending on the pedagogical and administrative needs of each school. Middle leaders are often classroom teachers who work with, and support other classroom teachers and students. Middle leaders can include pedagogical leaders, team and syndicate leaders, pastoral leaders, teachers with a specific responsibility, and coaches and mentors (Ministry of Education, 2012). Irvine and Brundrett (2016) view middle leaders as a diverse group who are often conflicted between the requirements of the senior leaders versus those of their team. They suggested many newly appointed middle leaders find it difficult to define the bounds of their role and viewed this as challenging due to the lack of clear structure within the role. They also suggest that taking on a leadership role within a school requires skills that differ from those of a classroom teacher and
teachers appointed to leadership roles may not obtain suitable training towards developing the skills required.

**Role expectations**

The change from classroom teacher to middle leader requires middle leaders to move beyond the managerial aspects to pedagogical leadership as a key function of middle leadership. Dinham (2007) identifies leaders of successful departments and teams as those who have had the influence of others for example when leaders have influenced teachers to develop their leadership, encourage leadership capacity of others and facilitating distributed leadership within their team. Dinham also recognises not everyone is born to be a leader, although with mentoring those with potential can develop into the role. In contrast, Irvine and Brundrett (2016) view the change from classroom teacher to a leader and manager of staff as one which requires a middle leader to use their own experiences within that role, in order to enable a novice middle leader to move from an “analytical approach to leadership to a non-analytical approach” (p. 91). They discuss the importance of middle leaders drawing on three kinds of experience to allow them to make spontaneous and intuitive decisions within the middle leader role. These experiences are: experiences acquired previously through another leadership role; experiences gained indirectly through leadership responsibility outside the school environment; and ‘referred experience’, that is, asking the advice of others in a similar role. It is these experiences which are the foundational support for a middle leader whilst transitioning from a classroom teacher to a leader.

**Professional preparation/leadership of a middle leader**

Adey (2000) and Gurr and Drysdale (2013) highlight the diverse work and skills required of a middle leader. The training needs and skills of a middle leader that Adey (2000) refers to are diverse, and it is questionable to expect a new middle leader to learn them quickly on the job, given the increased responsibilities. The area of greatest confidence for middle managers relates more managerial skills such as “making decisions; managing resources, accommodation, meetings, own time, team of subject,
prioritising resources and subject development needs; developing effective working relationships with other middle managers and senior managers" (Adey, 2000, p. 424). However, Gurr and Drysdale (2013) place importance on middle leaders being responsible for ensuring they develop their own leadership competence prior to developing others, as there are many middle leaders who have no training or development prior to being appointed or even feel it is a necessity. Gurr and Drysdale believe the “lack of professional preparation and leadership development by individual middle leaders” contributes to whether a difference is made within a school (p. 67), and they place a high importance upon middle leadership development as well as staff development to improve pedagogical practice within a school. Not all middle leaders acknowledge the importance of their role in the professional development of staff or have the knowledge and skills required to perform the tasks. Therefore, it is imperative for middle leaders to have a clear understanding of their role as well as be supported as leaders by the school and senior leadership team. Gurr and Drysdale (2013) highlight leadership structures and support as factors needed to create capable leaders who can transform schools. They argue “too many people in leadership roles are not leaders, do not have an expectation of being a leader, and do not have the organisational support to be leaders” (p. 62). As a result, there are many leaders who do not have the skills or attitudes to be leaders and are forced into roles which are beyond their capability.

THE CHALLENGES FOR MIDDLE LEADERS IN DEVELOPING STAFF

Challenges and tensions in the middle leader role

Research has identified multiple challenges for middle leaders. Bassett (2016); Dinham (2007); Fitzgerald (2009); Irvine and Brundrett (2016) and Grootenboer et al. (2015) all discuss the challenge of time limitations for a middle leader. Grootenboer et al. (2015) comment that time is not a new topic for discussion within the role of any leader, but it is a critical dimension of a middle leaders’ role due to the complexity of demands placed upon them. Having both classroom and formal responsibilities creates a tension between the time spent to ensure quality teaching programmes are being delivered while effectively leading staff in professional learning. Grootenboer et al.
(2015) describe the allocation of a physical space and time as an integral dimension of teacher practice to allow professional learning and the sharing of practice to take place; however, this is not always possible for a middle leader to achieve. Likewise, Irvine and Brundrett (2016) view the middle leader’s role as “complex and fast moving” within an environment which is affected by the lack of time available (p. 89), so that middle leaders may not be as proactive as they would like to be in developing their teams. Irvine and Brundrett (2016) describe, one of the hardest challenges for middle leaders is managing staff, due to differences in individuals’ views and stages of career development. They emphasise the importance of knowing staff, building trust, respect and emotional ground as one way for middle leaders to identify their staffs’ strengths and the supports needed for professional development. Fitzgerald (2009) identifies the time allocated to a middle leader to perform their role is significantly taken up with administrative department demands such as getting the paper work completed, resulting in the completion of their own classroom planning being finalised outside of school hours. Fitzgerald believes the change in responsibilities required of middle leaders include the development of staff within their role has challenged middle leaders and “intensified the teaching, leadership and management aspects of their role” (Fitzgerald, 2009, p. 61).

**Challenges in developing staff**

Bassett (2016) discusses the challenges for middle leaders and how the complexity of the role is increasing, while the development support for middle leaders has remained limited. Where that development is inadequate, middle leaders are challenged to carry out their role effectively due to being under-prepared for key aspects of a role which is already challenging. Bassett (2016) describes some of the challenges faced by middle leaders as “developing interpersonal relationships; tensions between collegiality and accountability; and a lack of allocated time” (p. 100). However, Dinham (2007) and Adey (2000) view one of the main challenges for middle leaders developing staff as, being reactive in determining decisions and support for staff development. Adey (2000) describes this as “reactive management”, that is, dealing with the problem when it arises. He contrasts that with “proactive leadership”, creating a planned programme for staff development which supports team strengths and addresses weakness (p.
Although within some schools middle leaders are not fulfilling their role as leaders of learning, due to making reactive decisions, Adey (2000) views the appraisal process within schools as another contributing factor to the decisions made for staff development. An appraisal process not implemented effectively fails to inform middle leaders of the kinds of professional development needed for their staff.

Dinham (2007) describes feeling under-prepared for the interpersonal aspects of the role, the lack of time for development as a leader, and being poorly rewarded for the role as challenges contributing to the pressures of a middle leader’s role and the decisions that are made for developing staff. Even where middle leaders accept the responsibility for developing their staff, this key task is often performed by middle leaders without the knowledge and support to do so effectively. Gurr and Drysdale (2013) suggest middle leaders who are successful in leading staff in professional learning are those who have developed a “common purpose, collaboration and sense of team within their department” and are actively “fostering teacher learning” (p. 58). Grootenboer et al. (2015) claim that it is not just important to develop the middle leader to improve development conversations within a team, there is also a need for space and time to allow interactions amongst teachers and opportunities to participate in development activities that will improve, develop and foster teacher practice. These authors believe that changing the nature of physical spaces contributes to the success of teacher development. The nature of the space in which development takes place can make a positive or negative impact on the development activities and relationships possible within these spaces. For staff development to be effective, there is a need not only to develop the middle leader to feel equipped to develop staff, but also for middle leaders to have the time and space to develop positive relationships with their staff.
Effective appraisal

A challenge for middle leaders, is effectively appraising staff. According to Cardno and Robson (2016), the way in which appraisal is achieved is varied, they found although there may be some appraisal happening within schools, it was not focused on leadership performance. Therefore, if middle leaders are not appraised for their leadership and management responsibilities, there will be no focus on professionally developing their teaching team. Furthermore, Cardno and Robson (2016) suggest in order to realise the value of appraisal, conditions of effective appraisal must exist to allow for middle leaders to effectively appraise staff to support professional development.

A national research report “Supporting school improvement through effective teacher appraisal”, produced by the Education Review Office (2014), sees teacher appraisal as having two main purposes - improvement of both teachers and schools, and professional accountability to ensure teaching standards are being met. Both Cardno (2012) and the Education Review Office (2014) conclude that, to improve student outcomes, and for appraisal to be an effective form of evaluation, an appraisal system is needed that focuses on improving teachers professionally as well making teachers accountable. Cardno (2012) describes appraisal as a complex process, with many facets which benefit both the organisation and the individual, that does not fulfil just one single purpose or activity. She states that, “An effective approach to appraisal transparently integrates the dual accountability and development purposes” (p. 93). However, the Education Review Office (2014) report highlighted the “need for schools to move from the prevalent compliance approach to realise the potential of appraisal as a tool for both individual teachers and the whole school” (p. 2). Cardno (2012) views appraisal as having a tension between accountability and development. She argues that teachers and the school need to be accountable for their performance and focus on how the school and teachers can develop further, as well as the appraisal system, to have a focus on improving teaching and learning. The effectiveness of management decisions on how teaching and learning can be improved relies on the quality of the personnel information managers have.
SUMMARY

In this chapter, the literature concerning middle leaders’ decision-making about staff professional development in secondary schools was critically reviewed. The literature revealed that the role expectations of a middle leader was demanding and varied. Middle leaders valued professional development however, were challenged in developing staff due to not having the skills to undertake their role effectively. The focus of the next chapter is to outline and critique the methodological approach utilised for this study.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

This section outlines and justifies the research methodology applied in this study. The use of a subjective epistemological position is explained. The reasons for using two data collection methods - semi-structured interviews and focus groups - are explained, the sampling strategies examined, and the data analysis process described. Finally, approaches for optimising reliability, validity and triangulation and addressing ethical considerations are discussed.

METHODOLOGY

At its simplest, epistemology is the study of the nature of knowledge. Bryman (2012) describes epistemology as "what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline" (p. 27). Davidson and Tolich (2003) suggest it is “the branch of philosophy that deals with how we know what we know” (p. 25). They also describe epistemology as the “philosophical questions which are central to all social research” (p. 25). There are two distinct positions of epistemology which both Bryman (2012) and Davidson and Tolich (2003) describe as positivism and interpretivism. The positivist position supports using methods of the natural sciences within a study, commonly using a hypothesis which can be tested, the gathering of facts, and purporting to be value-free. In contrast, the interpretivist position is closely associated with how people create meaning within their social world (Bryman, 2012; David and Tolich, 2003). Within the present research, my epistemological position is based on my own beliefs and knowledge. I was seeking information linked to the thoughts and actions of a small number of selected middle leaders who would have varying perspectives on the challenges a middle leader faces. Therefore, a positivist approach was not appropriate to use for my research.
Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) view the interpretivist approach as a focus on action, “behaviour with meaning” (p. 17). As an interpretivist researcher, I wanted to investigate the actions that a middle leader takes to make decisions on professional development for their staff and whether those would differ across middle leaders and secondary schools. Adopting an interpretivist position for my study allowed it to fit comfortably with a qualitative methodological approach.

Despite debate on the most appropriate research methodology for a particular investigation, Merriam (2009) views all research as having a common goal of inquiry or investigating something in a methodical way. Cresswell (2007) suggests qualitative research begins with assumptions; it may use a theoretical lens and involves considering an individual or group understanding of a social or human phenomenon. Merriam (2009) views qualitative researchers as those who have an interest in understanding how people’s experiences are portrayed, the construction of their world and the aspects of meaning they take from their experiences. Cresswell (2014) describes the characteristics of qualitative research as having the following core elements: being conducted in a naturalistic setting, where the behaviour under study occurs; the researcher as a key element of collecting data through examining, observing and interviewing from multiple sources; inductive and deductive data analysis; exploring participants’ understanding of an issue or problem; having an emergent process design; reflexivity from the inquirer; and a holistic account of the issue or problem. Cresswell (2007) suggests it is appropriate to use qualitative research when there is a need to better understand a problem or issue. This approach requires “taking time, involves ambitious data analysis, results in lengthy reports, and does not have firm guidelines” (p. 51).

My research questions focused on the expectations of, and challenges for, middle leaders in developing staff in secondary schools; how middle leaders and teachers make decisions about staff developments; and how middle leaders practice can be improved. Therefore, a qualitative methodological approach was appropriate. Adopting a qualitative approach allowed for the gathering of descriptive data and considering
the views, experience, perceptions and beliefs of the middle leaders involved, to explore the topic fully.

SAMPLE SELECTION

In selecting schools to involve, I used convenience and purposive sampling approaches common in qualitative research for selecting participants relevant to the research problem (Merriam, 2009). Convenience sampling is type of non-probability sampling based on “time, money, location, availability of sites or respondents” (Merriam, 2009, p. 79). The goal of purposive sampling Bryman (2012) is “to sample cases/participants in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed” (p. 418).

The schools who participated in the study were from two large New Zealand Secondary Schools where data was gathered from interviews with five middle leaders and two focus group interviews with a total of eight teachers. Three of the middle leaders and four teachers interviewed where from the same faculty which enabled me to gather data and compare perspectives to identify similarities, differences.

In deciding on the attributes of participants to interview, whether individually or within a focus group, I needed to take into account the research questions (Wellington, 2015). Participants were needed from diverse levels within the school to triangulate different perspectives. Interviewing a middle leader from a larger faculty enabled me to then interview teachers from the same faculty in a focus group context. Interviewing both the middle leader and teachers from the same faculty allowed for richer data including complementary perspectives based on the reality from two levels within the organisation. In fact, not all teachers in the focus group were from the same faculty as the middle leaders interviewed due to the number of recruits ultimately unable to attend the focus groups. Within one school there was only two middle leaders interviewed instead of three. Sampling from two large New Zealand secondary schools would increase the prospect of readers deciding whether the findings were transferable into their own teaching contexts.

The two schools who participated in this research each had a demographically varied student population of over 1,500 students and were located in Auckland. To avoid
confounding variables associated with state versus private or single-sex schooling, state or state integrated secondary schools were selected that were both co-educational. Selecting schools with a larger student population ensured a leadership structure with a middle leader role involving developing the teaching and learning of teams. Teams are large and diverse and as a result, middle leaders may face more complex challenges than in a smaller secondary school. I also felt conducting research within a state or state integrated school that was similar to my own school setting would be beneficial for my own professional learning and my schools.

Although it was my initial aim to focus on secondary school middle leaders and teachers within central Auckland for convenience of location, time and travel. I had to rethink this approach as schools contacted within this region were not willing or able to participate in my research. After contacting twenty-two schools I decided to approach secondary schools in a wider geographic region within Auckland to participate in my research. This was to expand my opportunities of obtaining an agreement from a school to participate in my research. Another twenty schools were contacted before two schools agreed to participate in my research.

I personally contacted each school principal via email explaining the nature of my research. I attached relevant information (Appendix A-Information Sheet for Participant) and email contact details to allow responses to participate or not to be made confidentially and independently. In each school the senior leader with responsibility for middle leaders sought volunteer research participants by presenting and describing the aims of the research. Those who volunteered were contacted directly by me with further information (Appendix A-Information Sheet for Participant) and were asked to complete written consent forms (Appendix B- Participation Consent Teachers and Appendix C- Participation Consent Middle leaders) prior to taking part. Both school principals signed an Organisational Consent form (Appendix D) prior to data collection commencing to show their commitment to the research.

Although School 1’s student body was larger than School 2, the schools were both state co-educational schools with a low-middle decile rating, as well as similar middle leadership structures and student ethnicity mix (see Table 1).
**Table 1: Profiles of Participating Schools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>School 1</th>
<th>School 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type School</strong></td>
<td>Secondary (Years 9 to 13)</td>
<td>Secondary (Years 9 to 13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Authority</strong></td>
<td>State</td>
<td>State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td>Boys 52% Girls 48%</td>
<td>Boys 54% Girls 46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role Size</strong></td>
<td>2058</td>
<td>1515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decile Rating</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Middle Level Structure</strong></td>
<td>HOD</td>
<td>HOD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māori</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>Māori</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ European/Pākehā</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>Pākehā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>Indian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>South East Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tongan</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>Samoan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samoan</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>Tongan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East Asian</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Cook Island Māori</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook Island Māori</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>Niue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>African</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fijian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Ethnicity and School roll size based on Ministry of Education figures June, 2015).

*HOD, (Head of Department)
**Limitations**

There are limitations to this sample and these are recognised by the researcher. While the focus group and interview samples were small, they were sufficient to identify clear themes in the data and manageable for a graduate qualitative research project.

**DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

There were five semi-structured interviews where three out of the five middle leaders were in their first or second year of middle leadership. Three out of the five middle leaders interviewed were also from the same faculty as the teachers interviewed within the focus groups. There were two focus group interviews where two of the eight teachers were in their first or second year of teaching and five teachers had additional responsibilities. Four of the eight teachers were from the same faculty as the middle leaders interviewed. There was a total of thirteen participants involved in my research.

Wellington (2015) views interviews as more than just conversations; rather they are a “conversation with a purpose” that provide participants with a voice and “platform” in which their viewpoints can be heard (p. 139). Similarly, Lichtman (2013) describes an interview as the participants having the ability to reveal “feelings intentions, meanings, sub contexts, or thoughts on a topic, situation, or idea” (p. 190). When interviewing, Lichtman (2013) suggests it is important to not be objective; the researcher’s role is to construct and interpret the participants’ reality whilst having their own lens. It is also important to accept there is no expert and the purpose as a researcher is to be the filter in which information is “gathered, processed and organised” (p. 190).

**Semi-Structured Interviews**

In undertaking semi-structured interviews, it was imperative to keep in mind that the interview was a social and interpersonal encounter, not purely a data collection exercise (Cohen et al., 2011). The semi-structured interviewing of the middle leaders provided me with the interviewee’s point of view. It also encouraged more flexibility for the participants to expand on topics, which enabled deeper and more detailed answers to occur during the interview (Bryman, 2008). The ability to ask additional questions
when interviewing the middle leaders and having the flexibility for them to expand on their thoughts was important.

Wellington (2015) suggests that planning out the questions prior to the interview and creating an interview schedule to ensure there is a clear connection between interview questions and research questions, is essential. Efficient preparation and organisation was needed to ensure the interview was successful in achieving my objectives. Forming an interview schedule, negotiating the interview location, date and time, and obtaining consent for recording of interviews to ensure accuracy were completed prior to interviews being conducted (Bryman, 2012; Cohen et al., 2011). An interview schedule was prepared (Appendix E-Semi-Structured Interview Schedule) to provide a framework to prompt memory of areas that needed to be covered. This allowed for questions to flow during the interview which covered the research questions. It was not only important to consider the research questions and what I needed to know, however, it was also important the questions posed were relevant to the interviewees (Bryman, 2012). The interview schedule began with more neutral questions (e.g. “what” questions relating to participants’ experience and role), followed by deeper “how” and “why” questions, informed by the literature, that asked participants to describe their experiences, knowledge, attitude, opinions and beliefs (Cohen et al., 2011).

Developing rapport, making participants feel comfortable and conducting the interviews with care and sensitivity were important key tasks which needed to be established from the start of the interviews to elicit meaningful and useful data (Lichtman, 2013; Wellington, 2015). To ensure this happened, I needed to address the “interpersonal, interactional, communicative and emotional aspects” during the interview (Cohen et al., 2011, p.422) by being a skilful and active listener and aware of non-verbal communication responses. Therefore, it was important when interviewing I was focusing on what the interviewee was saying and not concentrating on writing down what they said, as important aspects of information may be missed or misinterpreted. Each interview was conducted in a venue which was chosen by the participant at a time which was convenient for them. This allowed the participant to feel comfortable in the surrounding. I started each interview by having conversations with
the participant to make them feel at comfortable and to develop a rapport. Once I felt they were at ease I sought permission to proceed with the interview. The interview was recorded on a device, so I was able to keep eye contact with the participant throughout the interview. This enable me to be aware of their emotions when questions were being asked. Bryman (2008) views a qualitative researcher as interested in “what people say but also in the way that they say it” (p. 451). As a result, I used an audio-recording device during the interview, with the prior consent of participants, and then transcribed what was said. At the point of recruitment and at the conclusion of the interview the participants were informed they would have an opportunity to amend or add any additional information they felt necessary, thus reassuring them no data would be misinterpreted.

Focus Group Interviews

The second research method I used to gather data on participants perceptions and understanding of the topics, was through the use of a focus group interview. Wellington (2015) suggests it should not be taken for granted that the best form of interviewing is one on one, as group interviewing can have advantages. Six teachers from each school were invited to be part of the focus groups from the same faculties as the middle leaders interview individually. However, due to teacher commitments when interviews took place one focus group had five teachers and the other three, giving a total of eight teachers in two focus groups made up from a variety of faculties. An advantage of using a focus group interview was to save time, as I could interview three or more people in an hour. Focus groups also enabled me to bring a number of participants together with varied opinions and perspectives, which allowed for participants to be challenged by the views of others present (Cohen et al., 2011; Lichtman, 2013). For each focus group I organised with the members of the group directly, to conduct the focus group interview at a time and place which was mutually convenient for all participants this was done through email. At each school I was given a meeting room free from interruptions and distractions in which to conduct the interviews, these meetings were approximately one hour in duration in each school.

The role of the focus group interviewer is crucial to the success of the focus group. As the focus group interviewer I needed to make sure I facilitated and guided the
discussion and not be intrusive (Bryman, 2012). I also had to address potential disadvantages, such as ensuring any dominant individuals in the focus group did not take over the interview or inadvertently intimidate others, monitor the time allocated for each to speak, and ensure opportunities for any people lacking confidence to speak by diverting conversation to another participant (Bryman, 2012; Wellington, 2015). I made sure during the focus group questions I paused between each question and scanned the participants to make sure they had completed answering the question before moving on. This allowed for all participants to have an opportunity to answer before the next question. Lichtman (2013) describes the critical difference between individual and group interviews as group involvement and interaction, which triggers thoughts and ideas amongst participants, as the key difference from what can emerge during an individual interview.

Forming an interview schedule (Appendix F-Focus Group Interview Schedule), negotiating the interview location, date and time, and obtaining consent for recording of interviews to ensure accuracy were completed prior to group interviews being conducted (Bryman, 2012; Cohen et al., 2011). A focus group interview schedule was completed to provide a framework for the focus group interview. Guidelines outlining the structure of the focus group were included in the schedule to clearly explain to participants the expectations required during the focus group interview. This was read out to all the participants prior to the focus group interview starting, this ensured all participants were respectful of each other during the interview and were aware of the expectations. When developing questions to be used for the focus group, Krueger and Casey (2014) identify listening to the brain, the heart or both as an important aspect to consider. They describe ‘brain’ questions as “what” questions, which people respond to intellectually. In contrast, with a heart question, “how do you feel...”, people tap into emotions. Following Kreuger and Casey’s recommendation, I used a combination of both. I logically sequenced the questions using the five categories of questions for focus groups described by Krueger and Casey (2014), firstly focusing on factual opening questions which were easy to answer, then on introductory questions which allowed participants to make personal connections with the topic. Thirdly, transition questions allowed participants to become conscious of how others viewed the topic, followed by questions which required the participants to answer with the greatest focus.
Finally, ending questions enabled closure to the discussion and the participants were able comment on aspects they felt were most important. Prior to finalising the questions, they were trialled to estimate the time needed to respond fully to each question.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

Qualitative data analysis involves interpretation of the data to identify key information patterns, themes and categories (Bryman, 2012; Cohen et al., 2011; Cresswell, 2014). Cresswell (2014) describes the analysis process as involving “segmenting and taking apart the data (like peeling back the layers of an onion) as well as putting it back together” (p. 195). Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland (2006) describe analysis as a “transformative process” where the data gathered are turned into findings or results (p. 195). Lichtman (2013) describes two ways qualitative researchers can conceptualise data; identifying themes, and telling stories. Identifying key themes is described through processing and sorting through all the data and looking for key themes which arise. An alternative is finding a narrative or telling a story of the data. I used the method of identifying key themes when analysing the raw data.

The transcribed interviews were sent to interviewees for verification prior to commencing structured data analysis. There is no one single or correct way to present and analyse data however it was imperative I was clear on what type of data I wanted and what I needed to know to abide by the “principle of fitness for purpose” (Cohen, et al., 2011, p. 538). However, the process of transcribing the interview data and analysis of the data was time consuming, therefore to save time I did not leave the analysis of the data until all interviews were completed and transcribed I did this after every interview was completed this was also advantageous as emerging themes became apparent as interviews were being conducted and were used to guide supplementary interview questions.
Lichtman (2013) describes the progression from raw data to meaningful concepts as the “three Cs of analysis: from coding to categorizing to concepts” (p. 251). Cohen et al. (2011) describe codes as a name or label that is given to text that contains information or an idea. The process of coding in qualitative research according to Davidson and Tolich (2003) is the transformation of raw data into a standardised form for the purposes of statistical analysis. Through coding, the strength of common thoughts and feelings was highlighted from: within the focus group; and the interviews within the same school; and, interviews and focus groups across the two schools without participants being identified. Cohen et al. (2011) highlight that coding is not a “one-off exercise”, but requires the researcher to continually look over data on repeated occasions (p. 560). Once coded I identified commonalities through organising of the focus group and interview data into three categories and sub-categories which formed the basis for the summary and interpretation of the consolidation findings in my research, taking care to not identify individuals or schools.

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

In order to ensure that my research was authentic, trustworthy and had credibility, I had to show that my research was valid. Cohen et al. (2011) defines validity as “an important key to effective research. If a piece of research is invalid, then it is worthless” (p. 179). Cohen et al. (2011) identify two types of validity - internal and external - for both qualitative and quantitative research. “Internal validity seeks to demonstrate that the explanation of a particular event, issue or set of data which a piece of research provides can actually be sustained by the data” (p. 183). Giving participants an opportunity to check transcript, correct errors and add further information are other ways in which internal validity is suggested. In contrast, external validity concerns “generalizability, typically how far we can generalize from sample to a population” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 186).

Cohen et al. (2011) defines triangulation as using two or more complementary methods of data collection, as a “powerful way of demonstrating concurrent validity” (p. 195). To triangulate in my research, I conducted semi-structured interviewing and focus group
interviewing, examining data for similarities and differences. The data gathered was transcribed and given back to the interviewees and was available to the focus groups to be reviewed for changes to ensure accuracy and validity. In using these two-different methods, triangulation was applied. Including participants from two different levels within the school - middle leaders and teachers - provided a multi-level perspective of data, which Cohen et al. (2011) describe as “combined levels of triangulation” (p. 196).

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Bryman (2012) states “ethical issues cannot be ignored, as they relate directly to the integrity of a piece of research and the disciplines that are involved” (p. 130). Therefore, within my research, the consideration of ethical issues related to gathering of data and the dissemination of the findings, I needed to ensure I followed a process of ethical conduct. He discusses four ethical principles in social research – avoidance of harm to participants, invasion of privacy, and deception, and obtaining informed consent, each of these were addressed when conducting my research.

Avoiding harm to participants

Harm to participants can entail a number of facets such as physical or developmental harm, loss of self-esteem or stress, or failing to maintain confidentiality. Within the Participation Consent Teachers (Appendix B) the participants agreed to keeping the views of everyone in the discussion confidential so that everyone felt able to openly express their opinion. I believe that by asking the participants to keep the content of the discussion confidential that I have alleviated the possibility of views being expressed and being used to cause harm. I also maintained confidentiality by using codes instead names of schools and participants involved in this research study. I ensured there was no conflict of interest between the schools participating in the research and that I had no links beyond a professional association with the selected schools. Access to the data was restricted to the researcher and the researcher’s supervisor with all data being securely stored.
Obtaining informed consent

Following research approval from Unitec Research Ethics Committee (UREC), the schools were given an Information Sheet for Participants (Appendix A) which provided the participants with information about the nature of the research and how the interviews were to be carried out. This included the aims, purposes and likely publication of the findings involved in the research and the potential consequences for themselves. It also assured them that the data and the identity of the school and participants would be kept confidential, that data records would be kept secure and accessed only by my supervisors and myself, and that no schools or participants would identifiable in the findings. Both the focus group and semi-structured interview participation was voluntary, and participants were able to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

Bryman (2012) suggests getting participants to sign an informed consent form is an advantage as it is gives the “respondents the opportunity to be fully informed of the nature of the research and the implications of their participation at the outset” (p. 140). Obtaining informed consent involved asking permission from the schools, informing participants about key aspects of the research, to make an informed decision about if they wished to participate in the research or not, and gaining their written consent (Appendices B and C).

Avoiding invasion of privacy

Invasion of privacy refers to the issues of “anonymity and confidentiality in the research process” (Bryman, 2012, p. 143). The Information Sheet for Participants (Appendix A) informed participants that their responses would remain anonymous. However, ensuring anonymity of focus group participants was difficult due to more than one person being interviewed. I assured participants confidentiality by not using names of participants or other means of identification in reporting the findings. Alphabetical and numerical codes were used in the focus group interviews findings, so participants could
not be identified. All participants were assured of confidentiality when they signed the written Participant Consent form (Appendix B) and again prior to the interview process. To ensure their name remained anonymous each participant was given a code, so their names stayed confidential throughout the research study. In order to use direct quotes, I made sure the participants could not be identifiable in any way.

**Avoiding deception**

Bryman (2012) describes deception as occurring when researchers represent their work as something other than what it is. For example, researchers may limit their participants’ knowledge and understanding of the research so that they will respond more naturally to an experimental treatment. I informed all participants via the Information Sheet for Participants (Appendix A) of all relevant information about the research and reiterated that information before the interview sessions commenced. Lastly, to ensure my research was ethical I my research proposal was approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee (UREC) prior to the commencement of any research.

**SUMMARY**

In this chapter, I have outlined my qualitative approach to the research methodology used in the study of middle leaders’ decisions on professional development of staff in New Zealand secondary schools. Using a qualitative methodology has enabled the collection of rich and deep data. I have described two data collection methods used: semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews, as well as determining sample selection. Data analysis, validity and reliability factors have been discussed. Lastly, ethical considerations have been addressed.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings from two large New Zealand Secondary Schools where data was gathered from interviews with five middle leaders and two focus group interviews with a total of eight teachers. Three of the middle leaders and four teachers interviewed were from the same faculty which enabled me to gather data and compare perspectives to identify similarities, differences and aspects that were surprising or unexpected. Table 2 outlines the coding assigned to participants to ensure they were not identifiable. Focus group teachers’ perspectives are presented, followed by the interviewed middle leaders’ perspectives. The findings from both perspectives are presented under three headings: Professional Learning and Development; The Role of the Middle Leader in Developing Staff; and The Challenges for Middle Leaders in Developing Staff. The chapter concludes with consolidated findings which bring together the perspectives of middle leaders and teachers.

Table 2: Coding used Identify Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>School 1</th>
<th>School 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Middle Leaders</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1ML1</td>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>School 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1ML2*</td>
<td>S2ML4*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1ML3*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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(* from the same faculty)
TEACHERS’ PERSPECTIVE

Two of the eight teachers were in their first or second year of teaching, five had additional responsibilities and four of them were from the same faculty as the middle leaders interviewed.

Professional Learning and Development

The purpose of professional development

All teachers from both schools, when asked to explain the purpose of professional development, were able to outline a clear explanation of professional development and how it has a possible effect on students. Words and phrases such as: “new strategies”, “continually learning”, “new skills”, and “improve” were scattered in the teachers’ responses when describing how essential professional development is within a school. The teachers believed professional development was important to not only challenge and build their capability within the classroom, it also stopped them from becoming stagnant. This view is highlighted by the following teachers’ comments:

*I use professional development to disrupt my thinking and to challenge my learning as a practitioner and come with something new. It doesn’t have to be a thing, it can be new thinking.* (FG1F)

*PD is helping us learn and it also helps us put us in our students’ shoes as well as we are learning we can empathise with them.* (FG1D)

*PD keeps teachers at the forefront of teaching technology and theory.* (FG2G)

The teachers revealed the viewed professional development as essential to inspire them to be the best teacher they could be for their students. This view has been expressed in the following comments:

*PD keeps the pedagogy modern to give the teachers a larger pallet of teaching strategies in which to choose from.* (FG2I)
I think inspiration is part of PD as well, you want to be inspired to be a better teacher. (FG2H)

PD allows teachers to be the best that they can be, and they build the students that they can be the best that they can be. (FG1A)

These comments demonstrate the importance with which the teachers in this study viewed professional development.

**How decisions are made on professional development**

In teacher discussions on how professional development decisions were made within school, there were several similarities across schools, such as course selection and identified weaknesses in the department. Teachers either kept an eye out for courses they were interested in and applied, or if they had a perceived weakness, they may be volunteered by the middle leader to participate in professional development. This practice is highlighted by the following teachers' comments:

*My head of faculty sends out newsletters and things, of PDs we might want to go on if we have the time or if we have the drive to go and do them. (FG1D)*

*We are either volunteered or we volunteer for professional development. (FG1A)*

*If a staff member has a weakness, then generally the head of department will look for PD. (FG2G)*

*If the head of faculty thinks there is a particular area of weakness or interest, staff can be either be pushed towards certain outside of the school PD sessions or encouraged to attend ones they might be interested in. (FG2H)*

Teachers' perceived decisions were based upon budget constraints and timing of professional development applications. As a result, this practice impacted on who received professional development, and did not consider teacher need. Teachers made the following comments:
We are told whether or not there is money in the budget for us to go on our PD. (FG1C)

PD is awarded depending what sort of thing you are going to, whether it’s taken, and what stage of the year you ask for it, as the later you go in the year the kitty tends to be a little less. (FG1F)

Each person has a budget of 300 odd dollars or something a year to spend on PD and that’s it. (FG2G)

Assumptions were made by Senior Leadership Team (SLT) without consultation with the teachers in both schools on the most appropriate school wide professional development needed for their teachers to upskill. The decisions were SLT-led and are often made at the beginning of the school year. They are generally driven by the strategic plan, current incentives and initiatives being funded within the school. Teachers perceived that their wants or needs were not considered in the decision-making process. This belief is highlighted in the teachers’ comments:

PD is driven primarily through the strategic plan…. accessibility within the staff to choose what senior managers regard as the most important for the school and we signed up for them. (FG1F)

A schedule for PD is generally decided just before the term starts, so I guess SLT are deciding on that now and they plan out on a calendar what’s going to be focused on each week and allocated that respective SLT who had a lead on that within departments. (FG2G)

There’s assumptions in that those PD decisions are based on what the SLT are assuming teachers might need upskilling in. (FG2H)

I guess there is encouragement for schools to take new initiatives for some areas of education, but I think at SLT level PD is generally decided for staff. (FG2G)

These comments demonstrate the concerns with which the teachers in this study viewed how decisions were made on professional development within the school.
**Effective professional development decisions made**

Teachers believed that, for professional development decisions to be effective, there should be a direct link over time between professional development and improved performance, results or outcomes for students. This link can be achieved through tracking of students’ end of year results or through surveying. This view has been highlighted in the following teachers’ responses:

> Improved performance that can be proved that there is a direct link to a PD course, that might be, I guess, raising Māori achievement or something along those lines, then that would be seen at the end of our results each year. (FG2G)

> We have surveys that are sent out, whole school surveys to staff and students, and there is comparative data on the findings of those surveys. (FG1F)

> Pasifika and Māori kids, so the whole lot have been on track all the way through, and we have done some quite good work on tracking, and it relates to the strategic goals, which relates to the end results, which says that PD isn’t meeting the requirements of the school and needs to move forward. (FG1F)

Two teachers proposed that the appraisal process be linked closely to effective professional development decisions. They discussed links with between attestation and the Inquiry process which impact on what is happening in the classroom. They believed it was important to select the correct professional development to ensure the paper work was correct for the Inquiry being undertaken, and made comments such as:

> PD/Inquiry is part of our attestation and different things like that. We put down what we have learnt, and we fill out paper work. (FG1A)

> There is also the appraisal process, so getting reviewed by other teachers coming in to see if these things are happening in our classrooms, which is also tied to the inquiry process. I’m looking at sort of those two aspects mostly, this should monitor our professional development. (FG1D)
However, other teachers believed it is not always easy to identify the change or effect of professional development decisions. Doing so is dependent on the timeframe, feedback received and the environment in which the professional development has been delivered. The following responses typify the feelings from these teachers:

*It is hard to pinpoint the cause sometimes of those outcomes, I guess anecdotal, I mean, within school settings if it is run by a senior leadership member. Then they might ask for feedback from staff, but it’s generally not kind of not made available publicly, ‘I want your feedback’. (FG2H)*

*I can’t say it [change or effect of professional development decisions] was because of professional development. I think it is hard to judge and quantify if there has been an improvement. A lot of these things, if they don’t have the time and there’s likely to be an improvement, we might not see it perfectly or immediately after our PD session. (FG2I)*

It is clear from the comments that not all teachers in this study believed effective professional development decisions were being made within the school or were able to comment on how they were being made.

**The effects of the lack of professional development**

Participants in both schools were able to discuss the effects of the lack of professional development, and its importance. A lack of professional development not only impacted on the way in which a teacher is professionally challenged to develop and grow, teachers also discussed the impact on student growth and development as a direct link. Therefore, all the teachers felt that not participating in professional development could encourage teachers to do what they always have done and teach from the past, become isolated and stagnant. Teachers not being challenged may impact highly on student outcomes and learning. This view has been highlighted in the following teachers’ comments:

*Teachers become stale, they become set in their ways, they always do what they have always done. (FG2G)*
Outcomes for students may not be improving, or you may be noticing more unequal outcomes for students, potentially, as well, if you are not kind of given strategies to deal with inequalities in your class in terms of different levels and different ways of learning. (FG2I)

There’s a basic philosophy of teaching too many from the past, I think professional development helps that to be continually challenged. (FG1A)

There’s no development of ideas. We all just end up doing the same thing. (FG1D)

You just sort of sit at one level, you would stay there the whole time and just coast along, which I don’t think is very helpful for the department or the students. (FG1D)

You become insular and your pedagogy is not transparent and you’re not forward-thinking. (FG1F)

The comments emphasise the concern with which the teachers in this study viewed the effects of the lack of professional development within a faculty and how the lack of professional development has a ripple effect on student achievement.

The Role of a Middle Leader in Developing Staff

Role expectations of a middle leader

Teachers from both schools were able to clearly identify their expectations of a middle leader. Seven out of eight teachers believed the middle leader role was important in providing clarity and direction for the faculty. There was a high value placed on leadership to support teachers within curriculum and teacher progression. Teachers made comments such as:

HOD should provide for opportunities for other teachers to progress and give guidance on the direction of the department. (FG2G)

… to support the staff in the department to be the best teachers they can be. (FG2H)
... to provide clarity and direction and to support the progression of career. (FG1F)

... to be kind of the driving force and they need to be up to date with the pedagogy and to encourage that of their own department. (FG1C)

It’s important we have that back up in whatever we are doing, whether it is curriculum, whether it is student behaviour. (FG1B)

... to be the head learner and the curriculum expert. (FG1A)

However, one teacher from school 2 had a strong alternative view from the other teachers of a middle leaders’ role. They viewed the role solely as managerial, ensuring the department is kept in order, all administration tasks are completed, and deadlines are being met. This teacher believed that, if a middle leader had their faculty in order, it stopped them from micromanaging their staff and enabled the middle leader to guide and advise the faculty instead. This view has been highlighted in the following teacher comments:

... to deal with the administration of the department and make sure all the course outlines for the year are in order, to avoid micro managing and be there to guide and advise the teachers in the department. (FG2I)

... administration to make sure all the boxes are ticked, every deadline is being met, everything is being done the way it should be done, all pieces of paper have been signed and everything is in order. (FG2I)

The comments point out the importance in which the teachers in this study viewed the role expectations of a middle leader.

How middle leaders make decisions on staff development

When asked to explain their understanding of how middle leaders make decisions on staff development within the faculty, three out of five teachers in School 1 provided contrasting responses. Two teachers viewed their experience of middle leaders in making decisions on staff development as support, by filling in specific gaps in teacher and student knowledge and seeking professional development available. However, the
teachers commented they made their own choices on the type of professional development they felt they needed. This is highlighted in the teachers’ comments.

*I think, in terms of again my experience… just based on what we think we need. So, if we notice a specific gap in our knowledge or we notice something our students aren’t getting, we work towards filling that gap, and also what PD is we either attended or that’s available to us or we can attend. (FG1D)*

*If I look at it, it [professional development] is based on conversation which we have one on one rather than as a department….to my understanding that’s how it’s been, but I think as practitioners we… I have to make a choice of reflecting on where I’m going and what I need to do to change. (FG1A)*

Some teachers commented professional development decisions were made based on faculty, curriculum and a school-wide focus, not on individual teacher need. The middle leader made judgements on what professional development decisions were needed to shape the faculty without considering the needs, wants or interest of the individual teacher. Teachers mentioned the following:

*Well, my HOD is part of the curriculum lead team, and often just what is talked on the curriculum lead team and on his judgement, that shapes what he wants the staff to develop into. (FG1C)*

*… streamlining practice within the department, so making sure that everybody is on the same page. (FG1B)*

One teacher was frustrated and irritated in the way professional development decisions were continually being made within the faculty. Decisions were not based on teacher or student needs, but on the right conversations being made, whether you were present when professional development opportunities were being discussed or were seen to be of value to the faculty. This view has been expressed by this teacher when they said:

*I have been here 15 years and I have never been at the conversation when there has been sitting around a cup of tea as to who wants to do what, when.*
So I find it...completely ad hoc, not equal, biased, if you happen to be at the conversation you get PD and if you are not there, off doing duty or work, .....or anything else, like deans don’t have lunch hours, we don’t sit around the table, we are in the dean centre with kids. So, you don’t get to have a conversation, so you don’t get to do PD, and it’s as bland as that, and it is all directed by the HOD and who she likes and who she doesn’t. (FG1F)

However, among the teachers in School 2 responses were all consistent. Professional development decisions were not made by the middle leader, they were decided by the teachers. The teachers viewed the middle leader as the distributor of information for professional development opportunities through emails or faculty meetings. However, on occasion staff may be targeted for interest or professional development opportunities suggested by the middle leader, though without compulsion. This view has been highlighted in the following teachers’ comments:

*The head of faculty doesn’t suggest professional development for the whole department to take … just passing on what the senior leadership would like the whole school to do, so just passing on the message what senior leadership would like … for the whole school to be focused on, and our head of faculty leaves it up to us to decide on what specific PD we would like to … would like to choose, we are not told what to do.* (FG2I)

*The HOD receives an email on the coming PD session, she will spread that out amongst the department and or go to colleagues that she feels would benefit from that.* (FG2G)

*The HOD would advertise courses that would, perhaps, might have been emailed or that they have found out from some source...yeah, and just see if anyone is interested.* (FG2H)

*The HOF does the same thing, passes on information that they have received to members of the faculty without suggesting, you know, you should do anything in particular.* (FG2I)
It is clear these comments demonstrate the varying teacher perspectives within the two schools on how middle leaders make decisions on professional development.

**How staff development is practised or managed**

Staff development is practised and managed within a school at faculty and school-wide level. Only four out of eight teachers were able to discuss how staff development was practised or managed within their school. Whole of school, department, personal, role-based and external opportunities were identified and discussed as types of professional development practised within School 1, as highlighted in the following teachers’ comments:

*There is a certain amount that you actually get through the school, … that is led by in school, ok so, … we have Wednesday mornings which is PLD and different things like that. We’re taught on the school goals. And the external, we’re generally given one opportunity to go out externally and get training …. and where we go through and fill out a form. (FG1A)*

*We do have every Wednesday morning school PD, that is on a three-weekly rotation. Then there’s department PD, then there’s staff whole school PD. So, in terms of in the department, usually we have that sort of period of time to do that, my head of department sets up, so that sort of, I guess, that allows everyone to have the same opportunity for the PD. (FG1D)*

*There is also role-based professional development, like, for instance, deans, we sought justice training and education outside the classroom training, but that’s based on a particular role, and sometimes taking on a role in itself, you get opportunities to do training. (FG1A)*

On the other hand, teachers within School 2 were able to discuss only how professional development was managed within their school. Determining factors of how professional development was awarded were relevance, quantity of professional development received and budget constraints. This perception is highlighted in the following teacher comments:
PD that comes up, it is appointed to the person that it is most relevant to. So, if it is a new teacher coming through, then it could be something on classroom behaviour, then… that PD session is likely to go to that person that needs it the most. (FG2G)

… there is an allocation for professional development (FG2G)

If there is a quite a few staff interested, if there is budget that allows, then that would be fine. (FG2H)

If there is someone that hasn’t been on PD that year and something comes up, they would be more likely kind of get first pick if they have not done anything or if they have not done much that year. (FG2H)

These comments demonstrate the importance with which the teachers in this study perceived how staff development is practiced or managed.

Challenges for Middle Leaders in Developing Staff

Issues/challenges in teachers accessing relevant professional development

When describing the issues and challenges teachers faced in accessing relevant professional development within each school, the words conveyed most often were budget, time and relevance. Time was a significant factor, teachers considered when seeking professional development due to the high impact on classroom and student interruptions, and personal and preparation time needed to attend professional development courses. Teachers viewed their personal time and the time in the classroom of higher value than attending professional development courses. The following responses typify the feelings from these teachers:

So there are some things I might …. I would like to do that, but there are sort of time restrictions, not necessarily relating to school, it’s sort of my own personal life as well, …. in terms of that sort of my perspective of the challenges. (FG1D)
time, especially when you have students who are constantly doing assessments … if you miss out a day, then you are already behind, and they [teachers] always like try and compete to make sure their kids are up to standard ….. we want to continue to teach our kids, so we don’t have enough time. (FG1C)

Taking time off your classes to attend a PD session outside of school, it is always something I weigh up, is it better for me to be here or to go and upskill … it never seems to be the right time to have the day off to go and do that is the biggest challenge for me. (FG2G)

… just have to weigh up staying at school for that day or attending that course ….and just the organisation involved sometimes is not actually that much, but to find the right course and to apply for the course and fill in the paper work … it all takes that little bit of time, so I guess time is a factor in terms of getting applications in on time and stuff like that. (FG2H)

Budget constraints and finding the most appropriate professional development course weighed heavily on teachers’ choices. Personal and professional interest was of high importance. However, these factors were not always of relevance, as some teachers believed professional development decisions were prioritised financially and not on the basis of teacher or student need. This view is highlighted by the following teachers’ comments:

PD I would choose to attend would be, I would perceive it as being perhaps more relevant, because it is something I have chosen it is more relevant, something I’m interested in, it is directly linked to my subject area often. (FG2H)

… the cost, some …. one-day PD sessions are $400, $450, so weighing that up, we only have a small budget, being able to justify going and spend that much money for a one day. (FG2G)

I just missed out on a PD I really wanted to go to, which I think is really gutting, … so it was quite expensive, it was $250, and it was to look at scholarship … which was really important, because the scholarship teacher is going away this
term, but they only had enough for one spot, so I missed out on this one, so hopefully next time. (FG1C)

These comments describe key challenges and issues faced by the teachers in this study in accessing relevant professional development.

**How professional development decisions can be made so they are useful**

Six teachers discussed how professional development decisions can be made so they are useful. Two teachers commented on the importance for middle leaders to have professional development become part of their job description, increasing the value and accountability for teacher development and learning. However, one teacher highlighted the importance of time. Valued professional development decisions would only occur if the middle leader had the time to listen and evaluate what their staff needed, as highlighted in the following comments:

*It becomes part of the HOD’s job description I suppose, … to sort of treat staff members so they have a pathway I suppose, like we would do with students… if your HOD’s not having those discussions with you, then they don’t know where you are in your learning and what you want and where you want to go. (FG1F)*

*I just think it all comes down to time, even if we got some time to actually sit down and research and actually get our head together and figure out what would we want, what would actually help us, and the HOD has time to actually listen to us, listen to this is what this person needs to continue to develop… that would be great. (FG1C)*

Two teachers spoke of having more individual choice or tailored professional development sessions, which could lead to more relevant learning and increase engagement amongst teachers. They commented:

*I would like to see professional development to be tailored to the individual staff member. (FG1F)*
As a staff, a school-wide thing, some PD sessions we’ve had choice and we’ve gathered together in a group who have interest in exploring a certain topic. I guess that’s, perhaps, that’s one way decisions can be made to be more relevant, as you can opt into that ...whether or not it ended up being relevant is a different issue. I think the idea of having choice and being able to opt into learning about something that you perceive to be relevant to your practice or something that you’re interested in and developing further...may some more improved engagement perhaps. (FG2H)

Sharing of practice through professional learning groups, observing other teachers, attending focus groups and reporting back after professional learning sessions are all avenues teachers discussed for sharing of knowledge to occur and were seen as valuable professional development learning opportunities. However, one teacher also believed improving the appraisal process would be one avenue for identifying areas of concern. This view is highlighted in the teachers’ comments:

*If someone goes on a PD session they are encouraged to come back at the next department meeting and share the information that they gained from that or benefited out of it, which is quite useful, so sharing the cost a little bit and the knowledge. (FG2G)*

... being able to observe other teachers as well... just another way to see how other teachers might do things differently, it kind of gives you a chance to realise .... perhaps something you might not be doing, you could learn more about. (FG2H)

*I’m part of a focus group ... Every Friday lunch we meet, and I find that a useful way to share professional development, and any teacher who happens to be in that room on a lunch time Friday, we are just freely able to share our knowledge. (FG2I)*

*I think the appraisal process helps out, it identifies areas of weaknesses, discussions between colleagues ... discussions about competences, and also highlight areas that need to be addressed or improved. (FG2G)*
The comments emphasise how professional development decisions can be made so they are useful for the teachers in this study.

**How the role of a middle leader can be improved to support professional development**

The importance of providing the middle leaders with coaching and professional development opportunities was expressed by the teachers from both schools, enabling leading of learning to occur as well as their own personal growth and development. One teacher from School 1 stated that it enabled middle leaders as follows:

… less deficit thinking, so that they are leading, not managing, and are more on board with the direction the school is moving in, instead of standing still and sort of trapped in the death of PowerPoints. (FG1F)

A teacher from School 2 echoed this idea by stating:

… if the head of department also had maybe time and encouraged to do their own professional development, …. I think that kind of sense of like learning, growing and inspiration is kind of fostered more. (FG2H)

Teachers in both schools believed that not having enough time was an influencing factor for middle leaders in supporting professional development. Teachers from School 1 suggested that time could be taken from meetings that they viewed as irrelevant and spent on specific department professional development instead. However, teachers from School 2 proposed that more time be allocated to middle leaders to observe teacher practice more frequently, to improve pedagogy and make the appraisal and observation process of higher value. This is highlighted in the following teachers’ comments:

I feel like there are some other times we meet as well, but taking one of those every now and then and taking it and turning it to PD time instead, for like, just for departments, just trying something different, I feel like we spend a lot of time in meetings talking about stuff that doesn’t get done. … so yeah, taking some of that time and actually doing something with it would be quite helpful. (FG1D)
I guess more time won’t hurt, time for them [middle leaders] to get around and see the teaching and learning that is happening in the classes .... I think you tend to just see who is teaching next to you and not see the whole department unless you really make time for it. Student feedback might be beneficial, student voice. (FG2G)

I would agree with that [more time needed], and if there was more allocated time for head of faculty to observe the teachers, and perhaps if it was done in a way that was not scary, the head of faculty observing you now, coupled with you giving a lesson, with you ticking all the boxes, but just more of a casual observation might be nice. (FG2I)

To support the availability of time, teachers in School 2 felt that if the middle leaders had a professional development data base which was easily accessed, professional development for teachers in their faculty may become a higher priority, as middle leaders could easily find relevant professional development for their teachers. This view was expressed by the teachers in the following statements.

... it might be helpful for a head of faculty to have some sort of easy data as base where they can access any sort of PD that’s going on, rather than just waiting for an email and forwarding it onto staff members - if there was, say .... an easy way for them to access all PD that’s going on, ... because they are so busy, it must be very low down on the list, to hunt around for relevant PD on behalf of their faculty. (FG2I)

I really like that idea of a data base as well, because you get random emails from different kinds of professional development providers, and .... you might just be lucky to kind of come across the right one at the right time. (FG2H)

These comments demonstrate the importance with which the teachers in this study perceived how the role of the middle leader could be improved to support professional development for teachers.
MIDDLE LEADERS’ PERSPECTIVES

Three out of the five middle leaders were in their first or second year of middle leadership. Three out of the five middle leaders were from the same faculties as the teachers interviewed within the focus groups.

Professional Learning and Development

The purpose of professional development

Middle leaders defined the purpose of professional development by employing terms such as “improve knowledge”, “understanding”, “capability”, “experience”, “confidence” and “identify gaps” within their responses. Improvement of knowledge and understanding was identified as a key component and an essential aspect of professional development. This view is described in the following middle leaders’ comments:

… professional development is identifying the holes and gaps in your knowledge and finding ways to fill them. (S1ML1)

… to improve our teaching and our experiences for our young people, essentially, … and sometimes I think it’s about making sure that teachers feel confident in their practice and what they’re doing. (S1ML2)

… improving their capability in teaching, in delivering, capability mentoring, capability in getting others involved to do what we say, the best for our students at any point in time. (S1ML3)

Professional development is to grow teachers and to make improvements in areas which they think they need to grow with or make improvements in. (S2ML5)

One middle leader described professional development as a way of not becoming stagnant and keeping up with developments and change, which they viewed as critical when they commented:
Three middle leaders described professional development positively as a way of creating professional connections internally and externally. However, the content was regarded as non-relevant or pointless at times, when the professional development is not specific or targeted to the teacher’s needs. This is highlighted by the following middle leader comments:

There are times where we have professional development that isn’t relevant, especially when you have been in this system for so long. We saw this 10 years ago, you reword it and bring it back to us. The rule is, if you target PD really well and it has a student-driven focus, you should get a lot out of any PDs. (S2ML5)

I do find sometimes it kind of a gap filler and pointless… I guess to go outside of school, as it is a big deal to have a day off… It is a lot of work, and if they are not offering what you need, then you really have to make the most of the PD. (S2ML4)

Recently I’ve been on PD and it was for being a middle management person, which was so helpful and so needed, luckily, I found that, and the school supported me to go on it and that gave me a much better understanding of what I didn’t know, because I thought I knew a lot more than I actually did. So now that I have done that, I can understand how useful it can be, as often times … you will go on conference, and conference is awesome, you make networks, you get ideas, you get a lot out of it, you really do, but it’s not specific. So, going on something this year that was so specific, that I needed help with, I could really start to understand how useful PD can be when it’s targeted. (S1ML1)

These comments demonstrate the importance with which the middle leaders in this study viewed professional development.
How decisions are made on professional development

Interestingly, all five middle leaders responded differently when asked to describe how decisions are made on professional development within their school. At School 1, according to S1ML3, the decisions are made based on funding and senior leadership discretion. This is highlighted in the following comment:

First of all, we have to apply for the funding and it goes to the senior leadership and there is someone in the leadership who is in charge of professional development, and the funds, they look at how... they allocate each department a number of dollars and I think they do that by looking at how many people are there, how many teachers there are. So, the bigger the department, they will have a bigger chunk of money, and then they... we apply to them, and... mostly 99% of the time we get the funding. If we can show that it is needed by the teachers in my faculty, we do get it. So, we don't get a knock back, you know, as such, and they are very generous at that.

In contrast, S1ML1 believed professional development decisions were based on the individual as well as targeted by the middle leader or senior leadership.

So individually we apply to go on PD. Sometimes I'm guessing HOD's will recommend, so I have a plan this year for some of my staff to help with externals. That's because we have struggled with excellences in externals recently, so I guess HODs can target certain areas they want to go ahead with, and the school can recommend... So, either it can come from a HOD, it could come from senior management, and it can be coming from the individual saying I really want to go on this, can I? And then you apply and then they hopefully say you can go. S1ML1

Complementary to this view, S1ML2 recognised school goals as informing professional development decisions. S1ML2 perceived staff as being listened to by senior
leadership, having a voice and choice on the professional development opportunities available, as highlighted in the following comments:

*I think a lot of the professional development that we do as a school here is informed by our school goals, but I think that there is a lot of listening to staff and there are a lot of opportunities for staff input to what they think is important and what they want to focus on.* (S1ML2)

*So, there might kind of be four choices that you can sign up for one, and they're varied on what they're about, a whole range of different things, but my understanding [is that] those different sessions are based around what staff are saying they need in terms of professional development. I think that's really positive that people feel like they have a voice and that their needs are met in terms of those professional development opportunities.* (S1ML2)

At School 2, S2ML5 viewed professional development decisions as driven by academic achievement, school culture and student need. Student development and progress is at the forefront.

*Ours is data driven on academic achievement, on school culture, on student feedback, what we felt is needed by the school to make the progress the students need to in order to gain or make the most of their days of the secondary school environment. Some of the PD is absolutely important in terms of student development… PB4L [Positive Behaviour for Learning] and Māori achievement and collaborative learning and digital fluency. So, a lot of that PD was driven by the data we collect from students and from staff, and from KAMAR [school management system] and from Deans and from all areas.* (S2ML5)

However, S2ML4 perceived professional development decisions to be driven by senior leadership. Middle leaders are asked to deliver professional development to their teachers without being given an opportunity to be involved in content decisions. This issue is highlighted in the following comment:

*It’s kind of just given to us. As much as I know they are starting to that stuff now for next year, so they have planning days and it’s pretty much SLT decide what happens and we get told next year. There is not a lot of buy-in from anybody*
else, like I said earlier. This year it has been a little different, the HODs have been involved a lot more... more on where the initiatives go and how they all connect, rather than where do you see we should be trying to develop staff. So, we kind of get told and then we are included in the delivery of it, joining the dots. I guess as there are so many initiatives this year and I know a lot people are quite confused to the point of it and why we flip from one to the other so quickly. (S2ML4)

S2ML4 believed this has led to negativity and confusion on the value of professional development being delivered with the school and suggested the following should occur:

*We had a HOD Hui in term 1, and this term it helped us see how they [SLT] were leading to the same path. I think that needs to be a staff thing, if everyone knew where we are going and the point of it, then there would not be so much push back maybe. I think that message is getting through.* (S2ML4)

It is clear from the comments not all middle leaders in this study agreed how professional development decisions were being made within their school or were able to comment on how they were being made.
The effects of the lack of professional development

All middle leaders were able discuss the effects of the lack of professional development. Responses were similar across schools. S2ML5 spoke about teachers becoming ‘stagnant’ or ‘complacent’. S1ML2 and S2ML4 suggested that teachers:

… would do the same old stuff over and over again. Wouldn’t be kind of learning and growing in terms of their pedagogy and their capacity to teach. (S1ML2)

…. being stuck in their old ways and not be willing to try new things … if you don’t have the professional development then people will probably go off on their own little tangents. (S2ML4)

The feeling of not being connected or moving forward was highlighted by S2ML4 as a negative impact of not participating in professional development.

Wednesday morning PD we have here I think is really important. I think we all need to be moving in the same direction, … because as a department we are asked to make sure we are helping to meet the school goals. Without that direction everyone would just feel like the school would not be as connected for me. It is always just being able to move forward and give our students the best. If you are not doing PD then where else do you get that from …. yeah, I guess that’s for me the main thing.

Middle leaders from School 1 believed teachers who did not participate in professional development would not be reflective in their practice, have confidence or have the ability to deliver in the same way in the classroom as others who participated in professionally learning. There would be no growth and development towards pedagogy and learning and this deficit would have a negative impact on student achievement. This view has been highlighted is the following comments:

I think it affects the ability for the teacher to deliver well in the classroom. Finally, it is the students’ achievement, I think that’s very important. I think every teacher should have the ability to deliver in such a way, so the students get the best
education possible, and that can only happen if we share the best practices and that can only come from PL. (S1ML3)

Teachers would probably not be as reflective as they are with the type of professional development we have in place at our school. The way our inquiry is reported, I think that there would be people that would find it [PD] for themselves. I think there would be a lot of people that would do the same old stuff over and over again, and wouldn’t be kind of learning and growing in terms of their pedagogy and their capacity to teach. (S1ML2)

You’ve got a lack of … engagement and achievement from students. Teachers don’t know what they are talking about because they feel underprepared, so there is a lack of confidence, when that happens often that has a knock-on effect, … you’ve got confused students, you’ve got confused staff and middle managers who are in charge of their subject. … you have teachers who potentially don’t understand what they don’t know, I guess you don’t know what you don’t know until you find it out so, there is a real ignorance issue around that to. (S1ML1)

These comments demonstrate the concern with which the middle leaders in this study viewed the effects of the lack of professional development and how this deficit has an impact on teacher delivery and student achievement.

The Role of a Middle Leader in Developing Staff

**Middle leaders’ perception of their key role**

All middle leaders identified teachers as being at the core of their key role, however not all middle leaders viewed their role in the same way. Two new middle leaders referred to their role as the need for establishing a vision or focus for the department and making sure all teachers follow alongside the middle leader to move forward. This is highlighted in the following comments:
I think it’s steering the direction of the department as a group. I think it is identifying what it is that we need to focus on…. so I think my role is really to reflect on what we have been doing, where we’re at and what we need to do next, and making sure I bring everyone along with me. That it’s not just me saying this is what we are doing. Making sure everyone feels involved, and there is buy-in from staff, as it is very hard to lead professional development if people don’t believe it’s a priority for them. I think so far, we have been successful in kind of identifying things everyone felt needed to be worked on, so that’s what I will be trying to do moving forward. (S1ML2)

I see it for our department as creating a vision, and then enabling other teachers and myself obviously to follow that vision. Hopefully the vision is engagement and achievement for all of us. (S1ML1)

An experienced middle leader referred to the role has having two key parts - establishing resources and facilities for teachers so they are able to deliver in the classroom, and acting as a mentor. This is highlighted in the following comment:

My key role can be divided into two parts. One is to make sure the teachers are, or have all the facilities available for them. The other side of my role, I call it a mentor. Getting them [teachers] to be the number one producers of whatever it is, that they are doing the best possible in the classroom. Trying to give the students the best possible under our guidance. That’s what happens every meeting, I try and emphasise that, my key point is to encourage teachers, to do the best for the students under their guidance. (S1ML3)

Another experienced middle leader’s comments were clear and direct when identifying their key role as one of management and leadership issues combined. This perspective has been highlighted in the following comment:

My key role as a middle leader is dealing with just simply management issues. ...Leadership basically is what it is, you take the leadership activities pertaining to our department, and work it through with the rest of the department, and see
where you go. Leadership then management, management is the basic admin stuff that goes on in the school. (S2ML5)

Surprisingly, a new middle leader identified their key roles as the development of staff, meeting school expectations, working towards the same goals as within the faculty, as well as supporting staff with opportunities for growth and development to move forward.

I kind of see my role as getting everyone to work towards the same goals, but in their own individual ways. I guess I am not very strict on you must do it this way, but getting them to use their own individual flair, I guess to get there. But I have a lot of people in my department who do want to move forward, they want to move into assistant HOD roles, so for me it’s making sure they are getting opportunities to experience that stuff. I just have to be honest with them, about where I guess I see a need for them to improve, and that’s quite a tricky thing to talk to staff about. It’s about making sure they achieve what they want to achieve, while meeting the needs of the school and the department as well. (S2ML4)

These comments demonstrate the importance with which the middle leaders in this study viewed their key role.

**Expectations of a middle leader in making decisions on staff development**

The five middle leaders viewed the expectations of making decisions on staff development in diverse ways. Both experienced middle leaders described how they encouraged and supported their staff to participate actively in internal and external professional development, rather than telling them what to do. Professional development is driven by the teacher, not the middle leader.

It’s not up to me, it’s up to my staff, I just pass on that information and encourage them, should there be areas specific to their particular area. Whether they decided it’s the direction they’re going or not, they make the call. Of course, I will be sitting there talking it through with them, making sure they are making
the right choices, kind of thing. Other than that, that’s all up to the individual teachers in those particular areas. Unless it is a school-wide or department-wide kind of PD like classroom management, behaviour and all that, then I would recommend. … it’s easier to work with them that way, and focus on what they do, what they need and what they want, rather than I want you to do this or you need to do this. If it comes up in appraisal or classroom observations then we talk, we will talk through and see where they want to go, but it has to be driven by the teacher themselves. No point in me telling them go do this if they’re not really ready for that area, or they don’t think it’s important enough to impact on their teaching. So yeah, their choice. I can only guide and support. (S2ML5)

A new middle leader (S1ML2) suggested there was a lot of “freedom” with decisions being made, however these are also guided by the Senior Leader responsible for the faculty. S1ML2 believed it was up to the middle leader to make professional development decisions for the faculty, not for the individual teachers, commenting that this is “really up to them.” On the other hand, S2ML4 believed it was part of the “job” to ensure staff are being developed and meeting expectations required.

I guess it is expected that we are developing our staff members who move up. Some of my job I feel is not to keep them here as long as possible, it is to make sure I’m developing them to move into the position they want to go into…, whether it is through professional development opportunities… I try and get my new staff to go on [PD] so they can open their eyes to opportunities I guess that are out there. I don’t have a set directive, I guess, of this is what I expect from you, I just see it as my role to develop them [teachers] based on where they see themselves going. (S2ML4)

However, SIML1 did not feel confident in making decisions on professional development for staff, due to not being “told” how to and believing that “there’s no rule book” to refer to. She commented further:

I don’t know at this stage if I really know how to make the right decision about that [professional development] beyond that. I don’t think there’s a lot of training around what that [Developing staff] should look like, or how we should choose.
Hopefully it would lead to inquiry or school goals, which it always does, you know achievement is usually a school goal. But yeah, beyond that, in terms of theoretical, why did I use this, and how do I improve the PD for our staff? I'm not sure I am always making the best choices. (S1ML1)

These various comments demonstrate the varying perspectives across the two schools in how middle leaders perceived that decisions on staff professional development are made.

**How staff development is practised or managed**

Only four out of the five middle leaders were able to discuss how staff development was practised or managed. When asked, the middle leaders only commented on faculty-wide professional development.

One middle leader felt unable to contribute due to the following:

> I don’t necessarily think I’m doing the best job of it at the moment. I’m still learning how to be a middle manager, and obviously that workshop I went to was super helpful in starting to understand and unpack what that looks like. (S1ML1)

Three middle leaders identified emails as a form of managing professional development opportunities and communicating to staff. Two middle leaders discussed the sharing and reporting back of knowledge from professional development attended, thus reducing professional development costs and benefiting the faculty. Therefore, any decisions made on professional development must be of benefit to the faculty.

> I do expect them [teachers] to come back and feedback, it is not just the day or two off to go and do PD because they are usually quite expensive. So, to come back to the department, and explain how we can work as a department and put stuff in place, so we are just not going for a day and chucking it aside, which seems to happen quite a bit. We have made quite a point this year, when you
go and do PD we spend a department meeting or something feeding back on what we learnt, or getting some ideas on how we can use it in our lesson or in our department. (S2ML4)

People come back and give a substantial report for what has happened, and try and give PL within the department with other teachers. That’s how we try and manage it by reducing the number of dollars we have to spend. I may only send only two people, but that number of dollars increases as they come back and everybody else in the faculty is getting the benefit of it. That’s how we try and manage because we haven’t got tonnes of money to give out to everybody, so that’s the way we manage to the best of our ability in that way. (S1ML3)

Teachers can source their own professional development, are referred or are encouraged by their middle leader, however there is a process in which they need to apply for professional development. S1ML3 discussed the challenge they face in knowing who to send on professional development and decides in the following way:

It comes down to, who really needs it, who has not done very well in that area, and who would benefit from it, that would be the way I would decide. The other thing is, you had two PL already this year, so can someone else go. You know what I mean. So, in that way I dispute to other teachers, so the same people are not getting it all the time. (S1ML3)

However, S2ML4 believes it is not the process of applying for professional development that is the issue, it is the relief requirements and the processes such as filling out the paper work and preparing the relief for students that discourages teachers from applying for professional development.

It is not too much of a process to get it [PD approval], but it is getting the relief, and that tends to be the reason why people don’t do it. It is such a hassle to get people to try and take your classes. The timing of the year, like if it is a heavy assessment time. It is quite simple, it’s accepted if people want to do something then it’s very rarely turned down. (S2ML4)
A new middle leader discussed how departmental professional development focus was decided at the beginning of the year. At the “beginning of the term a calendar is sent out to everyone, so they know where the meeting will be, what will be focusing on, how long it will be for” (S1ML2). These sessions are planned, both as a team and individually, prior to delivery. This is highlighted in the following comment:

I usually end up talking to most people in the department and throw around ideas about what I think I might do, and get feedback from people prior to that happening. Then I work with the assistant HOD and we usually, plan together what the session will look like. Sometimes I plan it by myself, present it to him and get his feedback. I don’t think there would have been any session where I hadn’t sought feedback before running it, or hadn’t kind of collaborated with people in terms of what it would look like and what it would focus on. (S1ML2)

The comments emphasise the importance in which the middle leaders in this study placed on how staff development is practised or managed.

Challenges for Middle Leaders in Developing Staff

The biggest issues/challenges a middle leader faces in accessing relevant professional development

When describing the issues, challenges a middle leader faces in accessing relevant professional development two out of the five middle leaders had no issues and felt well supported within their schools. One middle leader discussed they overcame the challenges by accessing professional development in the last term when seniors are no longer at school which enables more free time, they commented:

We tend to do a lot in term 4 when the seniors go as well. A lot gets put on there, so you have more free time to go and do those sorts of things, or go to other schools and work with other people and other schools…. Having the opportunity to go into other schools, and just following a teacher or just seeing what they are doing. That is probably the most beneficial type of PD you can get. (S2ML4)
However, a middle leader from the same school believed time was an issue when accessing relevant professional development and stated:

*Basically, the issue is time. As we absorb more and more time, the less time we have to deal with all the other things, administration. Especially in senior leadership there’s so much to do, we just finished updating KAMAR on reporting stuff because it is hard…. time is the biggest issue.* (S2ML5)

The benefits of professional development, improvement of practice, results and relevance are challenges one middle leader faces in providing or sending a teacher on professional development. They believe professional development should only be provided if it improves the teaching or results within the classroom, not merely for personal growth. This is highlighted by the following middle leader’s comment:

*Some PLs are, I told teachers no, you are not going to go because it is not going to affect our teaching and improve our results in the classroom. It’s nothing to do with secondary school, it’s university. I know some teachers want to go, they love it, they love something to do with universities and I know they are going to improve. That area of competency is not required for us in high school, therefore I try and discourage that. You know it is improving the competency of the teacher in the classroom which makes me decided whether that PL should be approved or not.* (S1ML3)

This is in contrast with one middle leader at the same school who highlighted professional development as often being too student-based with a focus on student achievement and engagement at the core. They felt there needed to be more attention placed on professional development being more:

*…..accessible and available to teachers that actually just improves them, so that they can improve others, and not focussing always on students’ work.* (S1ML1)
Accessibility of professional development opportunities was an issue raised by S1ML1 without having to “hunt for hours” due to “no real hub of where you can go to find out what’s available for PD”.

The comments in this section describe key challenges and issues faced by the middle leaders in this study in accessing relevant professional development.

_How the role of a middle leader can be improved to support professional development_  

Four middle leaders recognised time as a key influencing factor in supporting middle leaders to form relationships with their staff individually, as a department and to also understand their professional development needs and aspirations.

_More time for professional development. I know there’s not a lot of time to do that, so my department meets once a fortnight after school, like an hour to an hour and a half, we have an admin meeting alternate week in the morning and then we have our every Wednesday, we have some form of school professional development. So definitely we do have time in there, but I always feel like there’s not as much time as I would like. More time to spend on PL as a department._ (S1ML2)

_I guess it is the time thing again, just being given a little bit more time, or the time we do get, not having it taken off us so frequently. There are always things even just with relief, if I had time to really sit and talk with my department properly, like I said earlier. I like sitting with them one on one, and going over their goals and where they see themselves heading and where I can support them. Sometimes I feel I don’t follow it up enough, so I know where they want to go. So, for me to support them, I need to be looking out and making sure that I take any opportunities that are out there for them._ (S2ML4)

_… bit more time would be good, that would give me time to actually find out what my staff require as for their PL, the area of PL they actually will benefit from._ (S1ML3)
S1ML3 suggested funding was “OK”. However, can always do with “a little bit more” as it would help improve the resources available within the classroom as well as the ability to spend more on professional development.

I’m just thinking of the computers in the classroom, we have computers on wheels, but the chrome books and things like that. I think we need more of those, so that we can have our PL on digitally, you know what I mean. We don’t actually have to meet together, we are getting there, we are doing some of those things, the best practice things on computers and we can read it any time we like. (S1ML3)

S2ML4 discussed the idea of a Senior Leader supporting middle leaders in making professional development decisions for their staff on a regular basis, not just during times of necessity. This is highlighted in the following comment:

I guess just the support from your line manager as well, so them [senior leaders] touching base with you, not just you are touching base with them all the time. Feeling like they care, and they are interested in what’s going on down in your department. If you do have an issue with someone, being able to go to them, and they help you decide on a better path for that member of your department, whether that be through PD or going to another school, working with another teacher or just support and time. (S2ML4)

However, a new middle leader struggled with the idea of responsibility and accountability for professional development of staff and felt who was responsible was vague. Approaching conversations, understanding job requirements and knowing if they were doing the job correctly was considered an important aspect of middle leadership to support professional development. However, S1ML1 believed professional development accountability was not expected to be performed by middle leaders, yet the middle leader wanted to be accountable for professional development of staff. This was expressed by this middle leader when they said:

I would love to be able to know how to approach conversations about that [professional development], and how much is my responsibility, if you know
what I mean. What am I supposed to be encouraging or facilitating? What is the responsibility of the DP in charge of PD? … How do I feature that [PD] into my department meetings and how do you do the job? That would be great, and what have I done correctly so far? What have done incorrectly? In a way I guess I am not accountable for it, I would like to be more accountable for it. (S1ML1)

These comments demonstrate how middle leaders perceived their role could be improved to support professional development for teachers.

CONSOLIDATION OF FINDINGS

Summary: Professional Learning and Development

Both teachers and middle leaders viewed professional learning and development as an essential aspect within schools to improve practice, knowledge and capability, and to continually challenge the learning within the classroom. They believed professional development stopped teachers from being complacent and stagnating within their teaching and allowed them to be professionally challenged, to move forward, to grow and develop. Middle leaders had found professional learning and development provided opportunities to connect professionally, externally and internally. However, they felt it was important for professional development content to be relevant and specific to teacher needs, to ensure it is not viewed as pointless or irrelevant. Teachers and middle leaders also perceived that a lack of professional learning and development impacted on teacher and student growth.

Several major factors influenced professional learning and development decisions, such as funding constraints, individual wants/needs, course availability and teachers being ‘volunteered’ by managers. This view was conveyed from both middle leaders and teachers’ perspectives. However, several teachers argued that timing of an application impacted on approval for professional development given. A school’s appraisal process was also linked closely to effective professional development decisions being made. Both teachers and middle leaders suggested professional learning and development decisions were driven by Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
However, teachers felt assumptions were being made on the best fit for teachers and highlighted there was a need for professional learning and development to be more inspiring.

**Summary: The Role of a Middle Leader in Developing Staff**

Middle leaders recognised the core focus of their role is to support and lead their teaching staff. Teachers placed a high value on leadership and middle leaders as a support with curriculum and career progression. Professional development of staff was viewed by both teachers and middle leaders as a means of identifying the gaps in knowledge and understanding of teachers, and supporting staff in order to seek opportunities for professional development. However, both teachers and middle leaders acknowledged a number of constraints when facing accessing relevant professional development, such as relevance to teacher and faculty, quality of the course being delivered, budget, and relief requirements. Despite this, teachers felt professional development decisions were based on faculty, curriculum and a school-wide focus, rather than on teacher need. Emails are used by middle leaders to communicate and distribute professional development opportunities available and teachers believed this was a quick and straightforward way to view professional development opportunities of interest. Teachers identified several professional development opportunities practised and managed within their schools such as: whole-of-school, department, personal, external, and role-based. A challenge for middle leaders was that they did not always feel confident in making decisions on professional development. Therefore, middle leaders deemed it more important to establish a vision or focus, manage resources and facilities for the faculty, to encourage staff to actively participate in internal and external professional development, and to make decisions on professional development for the faculty, not for individual teachers.

**Summary: Challenges for Middle Leaders in Developing Staff**

Both middle leaders and teachers perceived the lack of time as a challenge in developing staff. Teachers saw the time as impacting highly on the classroom,
students and personally when needing to attend professional development courses. They viewed their personal and classroom time of higher value than attending professional development. Middle leaders were struggling with not enough time to develop relationships with staff individually to understand their professional development needs and aspirations. Middle leaders suggested the support of a Senior Leader in making professional development decisions for staff on a regular basis. However, teachers believed middle leaders needed to find more time to listen and evaluate the professional development needs of their staff. Teachers also believed that middle leaders needed to be provided with more coaching and professional development opportunities. On the other hand, teachers placed a high importance value on personal and professional interest when making professional development decisions. Teachers wanted to have more individual choice, tailored professional development sessions and sharing of practice to increase the relevance and engagement of professional development and learning. Accessibility of professional development opportunities for staff is an issue for middle leaders. They often spend a lot of time searching for professional development for their staff and this becomes a burden and therefore is often not a priority. Teachers suggested having a central database that was easily accessed would be of benefit for both teachers and middle leaders. This initiative would reduce the time needed to find the most appropriate course and teachers would also have access without relying on information from the middle leader. A major challenge for middle leaders was the vagueness of responsibility and accountability for professional development of staff. Decisions were expected to be made based on budget, benefits, results, improvement in practice and relevance, not on teacher need. Teachers suggested having professional development become part of a middle leaders’ job description to increase the value and accountability of teacher development and learning.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a discussion of the significant findings reported in Chapter Four in relation to the literature presented in Chapter Two, under the following thematic sections: professional learning and development; the role of the middle leader in developing staff; and the challenges for middle leaders in developing staff.

This research sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the expectations of middle leaders in developing staff in secondary schools?
2. How do middle leaders and teachers make decisions about staff development?
3. What are the staff development challenges for middle leaders and how can their practices be improved?

Professional Learning and Development

*Professional learning and development is essential*

The teachers and middle leaders in this research viewed professional learning and development as an essential aspect within schools to improve practice, knowledge, capability and to continually challenge the learning within the classroom. They believed professional development played an important role in challenging teachers to identify gaps in their knowledge and understanding, and to build their capability within the classroom, so they did not become stagnant. Most of the teachers viewed professional development as a way of inspiring them to be the best teacher they could be for the students. It was also an opportunity for teachers to keep up with the latest teaching strategies, so they could emulate this back in the classroom. The middle leaders expressed that it was important professional development made teachers feel confident in their practice, capability in teaching, and delivery within the classroom.
This finding supports research conducted by Timperley et al. (2007) which identified seven important elements for promoting professional development and the ways in which these elements can impact positively on student learning. The seven elements identified are, extending time for opportunities to learn; the use of external expertise; voluntary participation in learning; challenging current thinking; opportunities to belong to a community of practice; alignment with research and policy', and lastly, having an active school leadership participating in professional development. Timperley et al. (2007) discuss the importance of developing teachers’ pedagogy so they can identify next steps for their teaching and identify changes in practice, which had a desirable impact on student learning.

Three middle leaders in this study described professional development in positive terms as a means of creating and fostering professional connections internally and externally. This finding is supported by Bolam (2002) who describes professional development as an ongoing process of education, training, learning and support activities undertaken by teachers and leaders. This process takes place either internally or externally, with its primary aim being to promote the learning and development of professional knowledge, skills and values. However, from the findings from this research, middle leaders acknowledged there were times when professional development was irrelevant, pointless or was viewed as a gap filler by teachers. My research shows that the professional development being delivered was not always specific or targeted to teachers’ needs and was often focused on school wide professional development. Middle leaders suggested in order for teachers to view professional development as useful, and not always with a negative lens, there was a need for teachers to know what it was like to participate in professional development when it is targeted to their needs not just focused on school wide goals. Cardno (2012) has commented that professional development should meet both school-wide and individual needs, and a balanced professional development programme should feature school development, curriculum development, management development and personal development. She proposes that the development of people can improve effectiveness of an organisation by holistically harnessing professional development potential. Cardno (2012) presents a holistic view of professional development as a model (p.101). She suggests that using a holistic approach to professional
development can ensure that both teachers and managers are being supported; whole school, teams and individual needs are met; strategic goals are achieved; sound educational leadership is underpinned; and a planned and cohesive programme is organised.

The effects of the lack of professional development

Teachers and middle leaders in the present study perceived that the effects of a lack of professional learning and development impacted highly on teacher growth. Teachers expressed not growing and developing encouraged teachers to be stale and set in their ways, doing what they have always done. Some middle leaders even expressed not participating in professional development would not allow teachers to grow and develop towards pedagogy and learning. Not having this growth in teacher pedagogy, middle leaders believed would have a negative impact on student achievement. Cardno (2012) discuss the importance of developing staff professionally, and how this can have a substantial impact on the way students learn. She suggests if teachers are aware of how well they are performing in their role and how well their students are learning, then they might be in a better position to target the areas for performance improvement. The teachers and middle leaders interviewed in this study believed that not participating in professional development meant that teachers were not challenged to move forward, grow and develop, but allowed to be complacent, stagnant and non-reflective of practice within their teaching. This could have an impact on student outcomes and learning. Teachers felt if they were not being challenged on how they deliver in the classroom, they were happy to end up doing the same thing, becoming insular and not forward thinking. As a result, this impacts on outcomes for students, with one teacher speaking of inequalities between classes and outcomes for students as a result of some teachers being able to participate in professional development and others not. One middle leader spoke of the feeling of having more confidence to deliver within the classroom and being able to be reflective of practice as a result of participating in professional development. Timperley et al. (2007) states professional development “does not occur in a vacuum but in the social context of practice”, and the type of learning which has an impact on student achievement requires substantial challenge and support (p.46). Therefore, my findings showed when you have teachers who are underprepared within the classroom, who lack
confidence in their ability to deliver content to students due to the lack of professional development. As a result, there is often a knock-on effect which has an impact on student achievement.

Two teachers spoke of the appraisal process being linked to making effective professional development decisions. They discussed how professional development and the inquiry process forms part of their attestation, and how this has an impact on what happens in their classroom. This is due to the process of appraisal when a teacher is reviewed on what is happening in their classroom and how this links to their inquiry, and what they had learnt so far. The teachers believed selecting the correct professional development to ensure the paper work for the appraisal and inquiry process was correct was important. The present findings reflect Cardno’s (2012) view that professional development is a “corollary of performance appraisal” (p. 98) in which staff need to know how well they are carrying out their job and can assess how well their students are learning, while being in a position to identify the areas of their own performance that may need to be improved. Adey (2000) proposed it was important not to separate appraisal from genuine professional development as this would only enhance a middle leaders’ perception that professional development of staff was not part of their role. The national research report “Supporting school improvement through effective teacher appraisal” conducted by the Education Review Office (2014) endorsed teacher appraisal as having two purposes: firstly for improvement of both teachers and schools, and secondly for professional accountability to ensure teaching standards are being met. Therefore, both Cardno (2012) and the Education Review Office (2014) believe that, to improve student outcomes and teacher professional development, an effective appraisal system is needed that focuses on improving teachers professionally as well as making teachers accountable.

**Major factors which influence professional learning decisions**

Middle leaders and teachers in the present research described a number of major factors which influenced how professional learning decisions were made within a school such as; funding constraints, timing application for professional development,
inconsistency with decisions being made, individual teacher needs/wants, course availability, and teachers being ‘volunteered’ to attend training due to faculty need. The teachers expressed frustration when professional development decisions were based on budget, faculty need or the timing of application as their needs were not being considered. This frustration was mainly due to, how the middle leader awarded professional development and the criteria it was based on, such as, if the professional development met the middle leaders’ perceived weakness of the teacher, or goal for the faculty. The professional development was within the teachers’ allocated budget and at what stage of the year the teacher asked to go. The teachers highlighted the later in the year you applied for professional development, the less money there tended to be in the budget. This approach to making professional learning decisions reflects research by Adey (2000), who viewed one of the main challenges for middle leaders in developing staff as being reactive in determining decisions and support for staff development. He described this as “reactive management”, that is dealing with the problem when it arises, which is in contrast with “proactive leadership”, creating a planned programme for staff development that supports team strengths and addresses weakness (p. 429).

The present study further revealed that there was a lack of consultation and assumptions were made by Senior Leadership Teams (SLT) on the most appropriate school-wide professional development needs for their teachers. Within the findings there is evidence that teachers felt professional development accessibility and choice was what SLT regarded as the most important for the school and what they assume teachers needed upskilling in. There was no links or consideration of the teachers’ individual appraisal to identify needs. Cardno (2012) presents the idea of appraisal having a tension between accountability and development. Although schools make management decisions on how teaching and learning can be improved, the effectiveness of these decisions rely on the personnel information managers have. Therefore, for appraisal to be effective, Cardno (2012) argues teachers and the school need to be accountable for their performance and a focus on how the school and teachers can develop further, as well as the appraisal system, to have a focus on improving teaching and learning. The middle leaders and teachers perceived that professional learning decisions were driven by SLTs, were often made at the beginning of the school year, and were influenced by the strategic plan and current incentives or
initiatives being funded within the school. One teacher spoke of how within their school the SLT decided on the professional development schedule before the term starts, without their needs or wants to be considered in the decision-making process. Similarly, a middle leader discussed how professional development decisions were driven by their SLT, and how they were required to deliver professional development to their staff without being involved in any content decisions and are just made to join the dots. This makes it difficult for middle leaders to get buy-in from their teachers when they are unable to see the relevance. Timperley et al. (2007) propose to gain consistent improvement in performance and practice in a teacher’s pedagogical content and knowledge, professional development was needed which was focused on developing teachers. It is important for teachers to identify next teaching steps, so they can make changes to practice to have a positive impact on student outcomes.

The Role of a Middle Leader in Developing Staff

Leadership competence

Teachers in this study placed a high value on leadership and viewed the middle leader as the driver to provide clarity and direction for the faculty. The teachers expected the middle leader to provide leadership and support within curriculum and teacher career progression. Fitzgerald and Gunter (2006) viewed leadership of learning as the “pivotal” role of a middle leader (p. 8). However, the findings showed that some middle leaders did not always feel confident in making professional development decisions for their staff because they felt it was not up to them to make decisions, it was up to their staff to choose the professional development they wanted to go on, middle leaders just passed on the information and encouraged them to go. Another middle leader felt underprepared for the role and did not know or understand how to develop or make professional development decisions for staff due to lack of middle leadership development. As a result, middle leaders deemed it more important to establish a vision or focus for the faculty, manage resources and facilities, encourage staff to actively participate in professional learning and make faculty wide professional learning decisions, rather than support individualised professional learning for teachers. This
finding is supported by Gurr and Drysdale (2013), who found that a high importance was placed on middle leaders being responsible for ensuring they developed their own leadership competence prior to developing others. The “lack of professional preparation and leadership development by individual middle leaders” contributes to making a difference within a school (p. 67). Gurr and Drysdale (2013) place a high importance upon middle leadership development as well as staff development to improve pedagogical practice within a school. Therefore, it is imperative for middle leaders to have a clear understanding of their role, as well as be supported as leaders by the school and senior leadership team to improve leadership competence prior to developing their staff.

**Professional learning practices and management**

Findings from this research showed that professional development was practised and managed within schools at faculty and school-wide level. Whole school, department, personal, role-based and external opportunities were identified and discussed as types of professional learning opportunities. Middle leaders and teachers described many constraints which they faced when accessing or making relevant professional learning decision opportunities, such as budget, time, quality of course, relevance to teacher and faculty, and relief requirements. Teachers spoke of professional development being awarded to teachers that middle leaders felt most likely need it the most, if there was enough budget and if someone had not been on much professional development during the year. However, one middle leader discussed the challenges they faced in deciding who to send on professional development due to the constraints, they base their decision on who would benefit from it most, who really needs it and who has not done well in that area? Despite the many professional learning opportunities available, the teachers in the present study felt that professional learning decisions were being made based on faculty, curriculum and school-wide focus, rather than considering their individual needs. Although not directly referring to teachers, Thorpe and Bennett-Powell (2014) suggest that coaching and mentoring are rated highly as a method of development by both middle and senior leaders. They discuss the notion of development and training as not being a “one size fits all” approach, due to the difference in individual needs (p. 56). Therefore, it is essential to ensure that
professional learning within a school is monitored and delivered to meet the needs of both the individuals and the organisation.

**Challenges for Middle Leaders in Developing Staff**

*The challenge of time*

The present study found that both middle leaders and teachers perceived a lack of time as a challenge in professionally developing staff. Fitzgerald and Gunter (2006) discuss the challenge of time for a middle leader where leading teachers and learning requires time resources and opportunities. The teachers discussed time as having an impact on the classroom and interrupting students learning when having to take time out for professional development. They also discussed the impact on their personal time and the amount of preparation time needed to attend professional development courses to ensure their students were still learning in their absence. As a result, teachers viewed their personal time and the time in the classroom as having higher value than attending professional development courses. However, middle leaders struggled with not having enough time to develop relationships with their staff and to understand their professional learning needs and aspirations. This supports Fitzgerald (2009) findings that time allocated to a middle leader to perform their role can be significantly taken up with administrative demands such as getting the paper work completed. The teachers in the present study agreed that middle leaders needed more time to listen and evaluate the needs of their staff, as well as being provided with coaching and professional development opportunities themselves. Grootenboer et al. (2015) comment that time is not a new topic for discussion within the role of any leader, but it is a critical dimension of a middle leaders’ role due to the complexity of demands placed upon them. Having both classroom and formal responsibilities creates a tension between the time spent to ensure quality teaching programmes are being delivered while also effectively leading staff in professional learning. They claim that it is important not just to develop the middle leader to improve development conversations within a team; there is also a need for space and time to allow interactions amongst teachers and opportunities to participate in development activities that improve, develop and foster teacher practice.
A need for choice and interest in professional learning

In the present study, teachers placed high importance on personal and professional interest when making decisions on professional learning. Cardno (2012) views teacher appraisal as having a tension between accountability and development. She argues that both teachers and the school need to be accountable for teacher performance and focus on how the school and teachers can develop further, beyond just the appraisal system, to have a focus on improving teaching and learning. The teachers wanted to have more individual choice, tailored professional development sessions, sharing of practice and the opportunity to observe other teachers. They felt these activities could lead to more relevant learning occurring during professional learning sessions and increase engagement amongst teachers. Gurr and Drysdale (2013) suggest that middle leaders who are successful in leading staff in professional learning are those who have developed a “common purpose, collaboration and sense of team within their department” and are actively “foresting teacher learning” (p. 58). The importance of knowing staff and building trust, respect and emotional ground is one way for middle leaders to identify their staffs’ strengths and support their needs for professional development (Irvine & Brundrett, 2016).

Accountability and responsibility

The present findings identified that a major challenge for middle leaders was the uncertainty of responsibility and accountability allocation for professional development of staff. Not all middle leaders believed professional development accountability was expected, yet wanted to be accountable for the professional development of staff. Cardno and Bassett (2015) discuss the possibility of a disconnect between senior leaders’ and middle leaders’ understanding of role expectations in relation to developing staff. The middle leaders believed that knowing how to approach professional conversations, understanding the job requirements and knowing whether you are performing the job correctly are an important aspect of middle leadership when supporting professional development. However, not all middle leaders acknowledged the importance of their role in the professional development of staff, or had the
knowledge and skills required to undertake it. Adey (2000) suggested that, despite middle leaders not fulfilling their role for developing staff, there is a growing acceptance of change in a middle leader’s role to include the professional development of staff. However, support is needed in how this is achieved. Although there was a lack of skill or understanding on how to professionally develop staff, the middle leaders within the present study were still expected to make professional development decisions based on budget, benefits to faculty/school, faculty results, improvement in student practice, and relevance of professional development for school objectives and goals, not always on teacher wants or needs. This finding reflects research by Irvine and Brundrett (2016), who noted that middle leaders are a diverse group who can become conflicted between the requirements of the senior leaders and those of their team. Dinham (2007) identifies leaders of successful departments and teams as those who have had support of others as they have developed their own leadership capability. They suggest that taking on a leadership role within a school requires skills which differ from those of a classroom teacher. Teachers who are newly appointed to leadership roles and do not obtain suitable training towards developing the skills required for leadership may find it difficult and challenging to define the bounds of their role due to the lack of clear structure within the role.
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has illustrated the importance of professional learning and development. It has provided a valuable insight into perceptions of the role of middle leaders in developing learning and the challenges they face in making professional learning decisions for staff. The major conclusions and recommendations drawn from this study are summarised below.

Firstly, the research concludes that professional learning and development are an essential aspect within schools to improve teachers’ practice, knowledge and capability, and to challenge learning within the classroom. Professional development is viewed as a key task of school management and leadership (Bolam, 2002). This study showed that assumptions were made by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) on the most appropriate school-wide professional development needs for teachers. Decisions for professional development for staff were made mostly at the beginning of the school year by the SLT, without consultation with middle leaders or teachers. The SLT used the school goals, strategic plans or current initiatives to base their staff professional decisions on.

The literature suggests that developing staff professionally will have a considerable impact on the way students learn (Cardno, 2012; Timperley et al., 2007). However, the findings of this research identified that teachers wanted to have more individual choice, tailored professional development sessions and sharing of practice. Professional development should cater for both school-wide and individual needs, and senior leaders should not make assumptions or decisions on the professional development needs of their teachers without consultation.

This research recommends that schools implement a balanced professional development programme that works towards developing school, curriculum and personal learning. This will be critical if they want teachers to positively influence teaching and learning.
Secondly, the research highlights that middle leaders undertake a pivotal role in New Zealand secondary schools. They are expected to provide leadership and support with curriculum and career progression. The present study identified a significant gap in leadership competence development for middle leaders, where middle leaders did not always feel confident in making professional development decisions. This situation was due to middle leaders not developing their own leadership competence prior to developing others (Gurr & Drysdale, 2013). Although professional development opportunities are provided within schools and externally, there is no leadership development specific to middle leaders at national level. Leading from the Middle (Ministry of Education (2012) provides a guide for the complex role of a middle leader. However, it does not provide or suggest ways middle leaders can develop leadership competence. At present middle leaders increase their own leadership competence through participating in university post graduate courses, as there is no explicit middle leadership professional development programme in New Zealand. This issue of no formal middle leadership programme must be addressed.

Therefore, this research recommends that in order to make professional development decisions for staff, middle leaders must develop leadership competence. It is vital that there is someone on the Senior Leadership Team to support and guide the middle leader with links to professional learning and development to ensure leadership competence is developed. It would help middle leaders be prepared to take on aspects of their role, especially in dealing with making professional development decisions for staff.

Lastly, a conclusion of this research is that middle leaders play a key role within a school. They have a complex and demanding role in communicating and improving school initiatives and working towards achieving school goals. While senior leaders view middle leaders as equally important leaders within a school, the present findings suggest that there is a lack of clarity between middle and senior leadership responsibility and accountability for professionally developing staff within secondary schools (Cardno & Bassett, 2015). My study showed that, despite some vagueness in role responsibility, the middle leaders felt comfortable in meeting curriculum expectations and providing clarity and direction for their team. Yet accountability for
professional development was not perceived by the middle leaders as a high priority. This may be due to middle leaders occasionally being placed in a difficult position where they are part of both senior management and their own team, and work hard to please both groups (Grootenboer et al., 2015).

This research recommends middle leaders must understand their role, responsibility and accountability for professionally developing their staff. There is a need for principals to make professional learning and development part of a middle leaders' job description, to increase the value of teacher development and learning within a school. This is necessary because of the responsibility shift for developing staff from the principal to a pivotal role of the middle leader.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES

Appendix A: Information Sheet for Participants

Information for participants-Middle Leader Interview

Research Project Title: Middle Leaders' decision-making about staff professional development

Thank you for your interest in participating in my research into middle leaders' decision-making about staff professional development. My name is Vincenza Golding and I am currently enrolled in the Master of Educational Leadership and Management course in the Department of Te Miro Postgraduate Studies at Unitec Institute of Technology and seek your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aims of my project are:

- To examine the expectations of middle leaders in developing staff.
- To investigate the practices of staff development decision making employed by middle leaders in secondary schools.
- To explore the challenges of middle leader decisions for developing staff.

What it will mean for you

As the Middle Leader with the responsibility for a Faculty, I want to collect data by conducting an interview with you.

The interview will take between 50 – 60 minutes long and will be held at your school and at a time convenient to you. The interview will be recorded and transcribed and a copy will be sent to you for your approval. Neither you nor your organisation will be identified in the final thesis. You are free to ask me not to use any of the information you have given in the ten days after receiving the transcript to validate.

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 project. However, because of our schedule, any withdrawals must be done up to ten working days after receiving my transcript to validate. I am very happy to provide you with a copy of the thesis when it has been completed.

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: Martin Bassett, phone 815-4321 ext. 8501 or email mbassett@unitec.ac.nz

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2017-1021

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 26/05/2017 to 26/05/2018. 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.
Information for participants-Teacher Focus Group Interview

Research Project Title: Middle Leaders’ decision-making about staff professional development

Thank you for your interest in participating in my research into middle leaders’ decision-making about staff professional development. My name is Vincenza Golding I am currently enrolled in the Master of Educational Leadership and Management course in the Department of Te Miro Postgraduate Studies at Unitec Institute of Technology and seek your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aims of my project are:

• To examine the expectations of middle leaders in developing staff.
• To investigate the practices of staff development decision making employed by middle leaders in secondary schools.
• To explore the challenges of middle leader decisions for developing staff.

What it will mean for you

I want to conduct a focus group interview with teachers from a range of faculties and would appreciate your contribution as a member of the group.

The focus group interview will take between 50 – 60 minutes long and will be held at your school and at a time convenient for you. The focus group will be recorded and transcribed and if requested, a copy will be sent to you for your approval. Neither you nor your organisation will be identified in the final thesis. I am very happy to provide you with a copy of the thesis when it has been completed.

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 project. However, because of our schedule, you have the right to withdraw any information you provide for this research up to ten working days after receiving my transcript to validate.

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: Martin Bassett, phone 815-4321 ext. 8501 or email mbassett@unitec.ac.nz

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2017-1021

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 26/05/2017 to 26/05/2018. 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 B: Participation Consent Teachers

CONSENT FORM – Teachers

………………………….. (Date)

TO: ……………………………………………………………………. [participant’s name]

FROM: Vincenza Golding

RE: Master of Educational Leadership and Management

THESIS TITLE: Middle leaders’ decision-making about staff professional development

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 I understand that neither my name nor the name of my organisation will be used in any public reports. I also agree to keep the views of everyone in our discussion confidential so that everyone feels they are able to express their opinion openly. I also understand that I will be provided with a transcript of the interview for checking before data analysis if requested. I have been made aware that the use of direct quotes from me in the write up of this research project will require my consent prior to being used. I also understand I have the right to withdraw any information I provide for this research up to ten working days after receiving my transcript to validate.

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.

I agree to take part in this research project.

Signed: ....................................................

Name: ....................................................

Date: ....................................................

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2017-1021

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 26/05/2017 to 26/05/2018. 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 C: Participation Consent Middle Leaders

CONSENT FORM – Middle Leaders

…………………………… (Date)

TO: .................................................................................. [participant’s name]

FROM: Vincenza Golding

RE: Master of Educational Leadership and Management

THESIS TITLE: Middle leaders’ decision-making about staff professional development

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research and I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that neither my name nor the name of my organisation will be used in any public reports. I also understand that I will be provided with a transcript of the interview for checking before data analysis is started. I have been made aware that the use of direct quotes from me in the write up of this research project will require my consent prior to being used. I also understand I have the right to withdraw any information I provide for this research up to ten working days after receiving my transcript to validate.

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.

I agree to take part in this research project.

Signed: .......................................................

Name: .......................................................

Date: ...............................................

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2017-1021

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 26/05/2017 to 26/05/2018. 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 D: Organisational Consent Form

Organisation’s Permission to Conduct Research

LETTER PROVIDING ORGANISATION’S PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Organisation logo/Masthead (please insert)

Date

Vincenza Golding
9 Marlborough St
Mt Eden
Auckland, 1024

RE: Master of Educational Leadership and Management

THESIS TITLE: Middle leaders’ decision-making about staff professional development

I (name) (position in organisation) of (organisation) give consent for (name of researcher) to undertake research in this organisation as discussed with the researcher.

This consent is granted subject to the approval of research ethics application 2017-1021 by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee and a copy of the application approval letter being forwarded to the organisation as soon as possible.

Signature:

Date:
Appendix E: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – MIDDLE LEADERS

Introduction, Purpose and Thank You

I would like to thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview as part of my research entitled ‘Middle leaders’ decision-making about staff professional development’. The focus of my research is to examine the expectations on middle leaders in developing staff and the practices and challenges of staff development decisions for middle leaders.

I have a number of questions to initiate our discussion which will provide me with the data required for my research.

1. How long have you been in your current Middle Leader role?
2. Please describe the structure of your faculty and the roles and responsibilities of those within it.
3. Within your school, what are the expectations placed on a Middle Leader in making decisions on staff development within their faculty?
4. What do you think is your key role as a Middle Leader?
5. What is your understanding of the purpose of professional development?
6. Can you describe how decisions are made on professional development within your school?
7. What are your expectations as a Middle Leader in making decisions on staff development within your faculty?
8. How is the process of staff development practice /managed within your faculty?
9. What issues and challenges have you faced in accessing relevant professional development for staff?
10. What are some of the biggest challenges you face in your Middle Leaders role?
11. Describe how you have or have not been able to address some of these issues and challenges.
12. What sort of relevant support and training did you receive to make the transition from classroom teacher to Middle Leader?
13. Describe the relevant support and training you have or you do receive in your current Middle leaders’ role.
14. What do you think are the effects of the lack of professional development?
15. How do you know when your faculty is functioning well?
16. Explain some factors which would help improve your role as a Middle Leader and to support your staff in professional development?

Closing

Thank you for your time today and sharing your views of these questions. Your views have given me an excellent insight into the nature of your Middle Leader role in your school.
Appendix F: Focus Group Interview Schedule

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – TEACHERS

Introduction, Purpose and Thank You

Hello, my name is Vincenza Golding and I would like to thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview as part of my research entitled ‘Middle leaders’ decision-making about staff professional development’. The focus of my research is to examine the expectations on middle leaders in developing staff and the practices and challenges of staff development decisions for middle leaders.

It is my role to ask you the questions, encourage your participation and moderate the discussion. It is not my job to try and influence or change your opinion.

I have a number of questions to initiate our discussion which will provide me with the data required for my research. I would like to explain some procedures to guide our discussion today.

Guidelines

• This discussion is being recorded so please state your name prior to speaking to aid the transcription process.
• One person speaking at a time please.
• Please allow opportunity for everyone to answer the questions if they wish to.
• Please also keep the views of everyone in our discussion confidential so that everyone feels they are able to express their opinion openly.
• Please turn mobile phones off or to silent.

1. What do you expect from your Middle Leader?
2. What do you think is the key role of a Middle Leader?

3. What is your understanding of the purpose of professional development?
4. Can you describe how decisions are made on professional development within your school?
5. What evidence or measurement has been generated in your school that show there are effective professional development decisions made?
6. Explain how your Middle Leader makes decisions on staff development within your faculty?
7. How is the process of staff development practice managed within your faculty?
8. Describe the relevant support and training you have or you receive in your current teaching role.
9. What issues and challenges have you faced in accessing relevant professional development?
10. Explain how professional development decisions can be made so they are useful to you?
11. What are some of the biggest issue/challenges you feel your Middle Leader faces?

12. Describe how your Middle Leaders has or has not been able to address some of these issues and challenges.
   - *Sub questions* - *In particular relating to professional development of staff*

13. How do you know when your faculty is functioning well?

14. What do you think are the effects for a faculty when there is the lack of professional development?

15. Explain some factors which you feel would help improve the role of your Middle Leader and to support you in undertaking professional development?

**Closing**

Thank you all for your time today and sharing your views of these questions. Your views have given me an excellent insight into the nature of professional development for teachers and the Middle Leaders role in your school.
Full name of author: Vincenza Golding

ORCID number (Optional):

Full title of thesis/dissertation/research project (‘the work’):

Middle Leaders’ Decision Making About Staff Development in New Zealand Secondary Schools

Practice Pathway:
Education

Degree: Masters in Educational Leadership and Management

Year of presentation: 2017

Principal Supervisor: Martin Bassett
Associate Supervisor: Carol Cardno

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