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Distributed Leadership in Scottish Primary Schools: Myth or Actualities?

Deirdre Torrance

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The Moray House School of Education
The University of Edinburgh

2012
Declaration

I certify that this thesis has been written by me. No portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification at this or any other university or other institute of learning.

Deirdre Torrance, July 2012
Abstract

This PhD study investigates distributed school leadership through small-scale empirical research using interpretative enquiry with aspects of a grounded approach, reaching a depth of understanding. More specifically, it explores the experiences and perceptions of early career primary headteachers as they take forward a distributed perspective on school leadership and management through three headteacher case studies. Each headteacher’s voice is heard through a sequence of in-depth, semi-structured and narrative style interviews. The study extends beyond self-reporting as staff perceptions of school leadership and management are elicited through a 360° analysis, a semi-structured questionnaire incorporating a sociometric analysis of leadership relationships, used also to explore the extent to which leadership is distributed within each school.

Definitions of leadership and of distributed leadership are contested. The problematic nature of each is discussed in relation to competing educational rhetoric, school leadership literature and policy discourses. Various complexities are found to exist in defining and identifying distributed leadership, acknowledged as multi-faceted, involving those in both formal and informal leadership positions, teaching and support staff. Distributed leadership is context specific, socially constructed, negotiated and hierarchical in nature. It is found to be ‘in the gift of the headteacher’ with each head showing a commitment to and central concern for developing effective processes for staff engagement in meaningful school improvement efforts. Regardless, a distributed perspective was not found to develop naturally nor easily. It was purposefully planned for and continuously supported. It involved the development of teacher professional identity. It required the balancing of multiple and competing accountabilities. Tension was found to relate to the headteachers’ intentions to engage staff, when they bordered on perceived ‘new managerialist’ strategies or manipulation.

This study contributes to understandings of the problematic nature of a distributed perspective on leadership by surfacing a range of conceptual confusions. The main conclusion, that distributed leadership is still ‘in the gift of the headteacher’, contributes to a limited empirical knowledge base. How the headteachers made sense of a distributed perspective, along with their motivations to do so, adds to
limited empirical data for which the role of headteachers is not well understood. There exists a dearth of studies into the experiences and perceptions of headteachers within a distributed perspective, even more so in terms of those within their early years of headship. The need for further empirical research is recommended to better conceptualise leadership generally and distributed leadership specifically, leading to a more sophisticated understanding of how agency and structure work in practice. Further studies could challenge five generally held assumptions identified within the distributed leadership paradigm: that every member of staff is able to lead; that every member of staff wishes to lead; that the leadership role of staff is legitimized simply by the headteacher’s endorsement; that a distributed perspective occurs naturally; and that a distributed perspective is unproblematic.

This research is timely as the teacher role is nationally reviewed (Donaldson, 2010; McCormac, 2011) and the GTCS redevelops the suite of national professional standards, constituting workforce reform. The conclusion to this study argues for a re-examination of the teacher role to reach consensus in defining what is required of teachers at each level of the school hierarchy, recognising formal and informal leadership roles based on conceptual clarity and role definition. It calls for openness and transparency in relation to principles for practice. Key recommendations are offered for policy makers, school leaders at all levels, leadership development programmes, theoretical development and future research.
Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement and thanks are given to those enabling completion of this thesis:

Each of my five PhD supervisors who took a relay stint to see me through: Professor Mark Brundrett, very much involved at the confused beginning, keeping a weather eye during the middle, and providing immeasurable encouragement and significant expertise at the latter stages; Professor Pamela Munn for her patience, encouragement and guidance through the first year progression board; Professor Pat McLaughlin for briefly holding the baton before retiring; Dr Tony Kinder for rising to the challenge and cutting through the procrastinations to remind me that ‘some is not a number and soon is not a time’ and, for introducing me to the delete button. Professor Cara Aitchison who despite her Head of School responsibilities provided constructive advice in the latter stages.

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Bob Wilson, my husband, who despite remembering my Masters progression and stating clearly that he would support rather than encourage my embarking on the PhD, has been unwavering in that support. He went so far as completing his own Masters in Construction Law so we could feign a joint social life for two of the years. And, despite his own work and study commitments, ensured that the family was fed and watered throughout, supported in the latter stages by my brother Andy.

Irene John, friend and childminder, who ensured since each child was four months old that they never suffered from neglect. For the past sixteen years, when contemplating a change in role, job or embarking on the PhD, I discussed my thoughts with Bob first and Irene second. Each time, I asked Irene if we could manage the next opportunity. Each time she replied, ‘of course, we’ll work it out’.

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I would like to thank the three headteachers central to this thesis for helping me understand their perceptions of a distributed perspective. Thanks also to their colleagues for their participation and insights.

And finally, I would like to thank the Internal and External Examiners and ask them to consider Silverman’s (2005: 73) perceptiveness that certainly applies in this case: *a successful dissertation does not require genius.*

Deirdre Torrance, July 2012
Dedication

In memory of my father Prof Victor B. Torrance (CBE) who passed away in January 2008, the month I embarked on this PhD. His learned guidance would have been appreciated.

Deirdre Torrance, July 2012
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AERS  Applied Educational Research Scheme
ASD   Analytical Service Division
CfE   Curriculum for Excellence
CPD   Continuing Professional Development
DHT   Depute Headteacher
EBP   Evidence-based practice
EIS   Educational Institute for Scotland
FME   Free Meal Entitlement (deprivation indicator)
HGIOS How Good Is Our School? HMIE series of publications
HEI   Higher Education Institution
HMI/E Her Majesty’s Inspectorate /of Education
HT    Headteacher
LA    Local Authority
LEA   Local Education Authority
LST   Learning Support Teacher
LTS   Learning and Teaching Scotland
NCSL  National College of School Leadership
NQT   Newly Qualified Teachers
OECD  Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PG Dip L&M Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Leadership and Management
PhD   Doctor of Philosophy
PRD   Professional Review and Development
REA   Rapid Evidence Assessment
SED   Scottish Education Department (now SG)
SEED  Scottish Executive Education Department (now SG)
S/H   Standard for Headship
SG    Scottish Government (previously SED)
SMT   Senior Management Team
SNA   Social Network Analysis
SNP   Scottish National Party
SQH   Scottish Qualification for Headship
TEAC  Tutors and Education Authority Coordinators (SQH partnership steering group)
TP21  TP21: the outcome of the McCrone Committee of Inquiry, A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century (SEED, 2001) also known as the McCrone Agreement or the The National Agreement
UK    United Kingdom
USA   United States of America

In the first instance, both the full and abbreviated terms are used. Thereafter, throughout the thesis, only the abbreviated term is used.
Chapter One: Introduction
The Study, Its Context and Purpose

1.1 Introduction
This PhD study investigates distributed school leadership. More specifically, it explores the experiences and perceptions of early career primary headteachers as they take forward a distributed perspective on school leadership and management. My interest in distributed leadership developed over a number of years through professional practice located across primary, special and secondary schools, at local authority level and more recently within the university sector. First through a range of teaching roles, then through a quality improvement role and latterly through a tutor and programme director role, I experienced and observed a range of both informal and formal school leadership. I became fascinated with and concerned about the notion of shared leadership practices. Having always been encouraged to take forward a leadership role, there was on the part of my line managers an assumption that I would do so naturally. I developed a range of skills and abilities in context, often in response to overcoming professional barriers encountered. Intuitively, I believed in a distributed perspective but struggled with defining distributed leadership and articulating what it meant in practice. Moreover, the unquestioning presentation of distributed leadership in the policy discourse did not correspond with my understanding of its practice as I first experienced, then observed others’ experience of boundary spanning between informal and formal leadership. Moreover, as I sought to better understand a distributed perspective, I found the unquestioning presentation of distributed leadership in the policy discourse did not correspond with confusions and competing discourses present in the wider body of literature.

An initial attempt at a systematic review of the literature identified a dearth of empirical studies into distributed leadership, later confirmed by two edited texts (Harris, 2009a; Leithwood et al., 2009b). This in part explains why, although often referred to within policy, theory and practice, defining distributed leadership is problematic in itself. Appreciating that much of literature available was aspirational or normative rather than based on empirical research marked a turning point after which, a more discerning approach was taken whereby greater weight was given to authors who based their views on empirical understandings. Of those studies, a deliberate effort was made to identify those with a specific focus on the role of the
headteacher within a distributed perspective (Anderson et al., 2009; Day, 2009; Dinham, 2009; Hallinger and Heck, 2009; Mascall et al., 2009; Mayrowetz et al., 2009; Murphy et al., 2009; Spillane et al., 2007; Spillane et al., 2009b; Timperley, 2009). Care was taken to represent different perspectives, examining each critically, providing a balanced view. Key voices across three broad perspectives were identified in the international literature, comprising a spectrum of views. At one end of the spectrum (e.g. Harris and Spillane, 2008), distributed leadership is welcomed and encouraged. At the other (e.g. Ball, 2008; Gunter, 2012), it is deeply contested and treated with suspicion, judged to represent little more than a smokescreen to provide an illusion of consultation for new-managerialist strategies. Between those perspectives, others (e.g. Gronn, 2009a and 2009b) acknowledge it is how leadership is practiced which counts and question whether the term adequately represents the realities of school practice. Indeed, this study sought to explore how headteachers (and their staff) make sense of a distributed perspective in practice. Its findings suggest that it is the way in which leadership and a distributed perspective are conceptualized and practiced which are key. Concomitantly, in seeking to build understanding of and trust in a distributed perspective, headteachers are tasked with navigating a range of multiple and competing accountabilities leading to variance in the practice of distributed leadership.

The comprehensive literature review instilled a growing understanding of the root causes behind a lack of clarity in the conceptual frame for distributed leadership. Reaching that conclusion involved a lengthy and painful process, requiring a return to first principles to map out the policy frame within which a distributed perspective was positioned and to distinguish the genealogy of educational leadership. Through both those chapters, multiple and competing discourses are explored and various conceptual confusions are identified. In order to surface the range of conceptual confusions, it was necessary to engage with a wide range of literature within and beyond education. In order to make sense of the various conceptual confusions, an iterative process was followed, zigzagging between data and literature. In that regard, themes emerging from the data guided subsequent reviews to explore at depth previously not recognised aspects of a distributed perspective. This led to the formation of the chapters on school leadership, distributed leadership and teacher leadership.
Few authors and researchers define distributed leadership in and for their work (Spillane and Diamond, 2007). Of the definitions of leadership provided, ‘there is a tendency to define leadership in terms of its effectiveness or outcome’ and to focus on ‘positive outcomes’ (Spillane, 2006: 11) which is overly simplistic. Part of the difficulty in defining distributed leadership stems from the conceptual confusion surrounding a definition of leadership itself. The literature review chapters explore this at depth but essentially definitions of leadership are heavily contested (Leithwood et al., 1999; Yukl, 2002) as is the distinction made between leadership and management (Ball, 2008; Gunter, 2012). Clarity in definition is key since the way leadership is conceptualised affects how leadership is practiced. The working definition of leadership used for this study was that offered by Spillane and Coldren (2011: 78) who define leadership as ‘a relationship of social influence’. When leadership is located in a relationship of social influence, expertise rather than formal position forms the basis of authority (Timperley, 2009). The working definition of distributed leadership selected for use in this study was that offered by Harris and Spillane (2008: 31) who use the term ‘distributed leadership perspective’ whereby multiple leaders, formally recognized or not, engage in a wide range of leadership and management activities, where ‘leadership and management play out in tandem in practice’ (Spillane and Diamond, 2007: 152-3). This model recognizes the difficulty in separating the theoretic distinctions between leadership and management in practice. It focuses on interactions in leadership practice and the influence of leadership practice on improvement. Those interactions concern ‘both formal and informal leadership and the way they produce different patterns of activity’ (Harris, 2008: 31).

Having selected specific definitions of leadership and distributed leadership, parameters were provided for data collection and analysis. Those parameters recognized that whilst the practice of distributed leadership is paramount, ‘there are competing and sometimes conflicting interpretations of what distributed leadership actually means’. Furthermore, that distributed leadership is often considered to be ‘a prescription for school reform’ at worst through teachers taking on additional tasks and administrative duties (Mayrowetz et al., 2009: 167) and at best ‘promoted as ways to harness the energy, motivation and professional learning of teachers and school leaders to secure sustainable innovation and improvement’ (Hargreaves and Fink, 2009: 181). To date, the literature ‘has not seriously addressed the potential
consequences nor the benefits of distributed leadership’ (Camburn and Han, 2009: 25). Furthermore, despite the ‘empirical evidence about the consequences of distributed leadership [being] not all positive’ (Leithwood et al., 2009a: 1 and 3), often little regard is paid to ‘the potential for distributed leadership to be misused’ (Harris, 2008: 157). An alternative perspective argues that a distributed perspective on leadership ‘assumes more permeable boundaries between leaders and followers and positions followers as an essential constituting element of leadership activity’ (Timperley, 2009: 212). The various conceptions of distributed leadership evident across the literature illustrate that it is ‘a contested concept embracing a wide range of understandings and often bearing little apparent relationship to what happens in schools and classrooms’ (MacBeath, 2009: 41).

This view of leadership and distributed leadership brings with it a range of challenges in its practice particularly for those not afforded a formal leadership position within the school hierarchy, although the hierarchical positioning of leadership is a contested assertion (Fitzgerald and Gunter, 2006 and 2008; Fitzgerald et al., 2006). That said, Scottish schools are hierarchically organised and as such, the growing body of literature on teacher leadership provides insight into the distinctive nature of leadership beyond the semi-private domain of the classroom, reflected in the analysis of the data. In the absence of a formal management position, the role of teacher leaders seeking to influence colleagues within the public spaces of the school organization is legitimised in part by the authority of the headteacher. Their role is also legitimised by colleagues and in that regard, teacher leaders require credibility in the eyes of colleagues as well as being recognized as having the ability to lead and manage adults (as distinct from children). In so doing, they require for example to: envision and communicate a vision of an ideal future state; be perceived as being skilled practitioners and feel confident about their own abilities; have a clear sense of professional identity encompassing a leadership role enabling them to overcome professional barriers and limits; understand the wider school organisation and aspects of administration.

In the absence of a blueprint from either policy documents or the literature, headteachers and their staff are charged with making sense of and socially constructing a distributed perspective in school practice. Both the literature review and the analysis of the findings identified that the practice of leadership (Leithwood
et al., 1999), distributed leadership (Louis et al., 2009; Mascall et al., 2009) and teacher leadership (Crowther et al., 2009) are context specific. Within each school’s context, a variety of interpretations and multiple realities or actualities exist. As such, in this study, small-scale empirical research using interpretative enquiry with aspects of a grounded approach was utilised to reach a depth of understanding, with a focus on three headteacher case studies. The headteachers’ voices are highlighted through a sequence of in-depth, semi-structured and narrative style interviews. The headteachers were encouraged to reflect on their own and the perspectives of staff. In that regard, staff perceptions of school leadership and management were elicited through a 360° analysis; a semi-structured questionnaire exploring the extent to which leadership was distributed within each school and incorporating a sociometric analysis of leadership relationships. In this way, the headteachers first reflected on their experiences and perceptions of purposefully taking forward a distributed perspective, then reflected on the experiences and perceptions of their staff, exploring different meanings and alternative perspectives. In so doing, the actual rather than aspirational view was sought. The ‘lived’ performance and ‘designed’ organisation were explored in tandem (Spillane and Coldren, 2011).

Throughout the thesis, the problematic nature of distributed leadership is discussed in relation to contemporary educational rhetoric, school leadership literature and the policy discourse. How the headteachers made sense of a distributed perspective along with their motivations to do so are also discussed. The role of the headteachers within a distributed perspective is investigated. Specific tensions resulting from the headteachers taking forward a distributed perspective on school leadership are highlighted. The need for further empirical research in this area is recommended.

This first chapter begins by introducing the aim of the research and its associated research questions, before providing a brief overview of the contextual background to the study. Specific focus is given to the programme leading to the award of the Scottish Qualification for Headship (SQH) which each of the three headteachers involved in this study completed. The context includes a discussion of the researcher’s role, matters of reflexivity and the history of the SQH Programme itself. Problems encountered by SQH participants generally motivated to take forward a distributed perspective on leadership are briefly discussed. The relevance of the
study is presented, along with its modest contribution to the field through contributing to the developing theory of distributed leadership. To date, although much has been written, little empirical research has been undertaken in this area with very few studies conducted into the headteacher’s experience and perceptions of taking forward a distributed perspective on school leadership and management. This study therefore represents original empirical work and contributes to new understandings of the problematic nature of a distributed perspective, and the central role of the headteacher within that perspective.

An outline of each chapter follows, beginning with a frame for the policy context within which headteachers and staff in schools make sense of distributed leadership, before providing an overview of the review of the literature, beset with confusion and competing understandings. The lack of both empirical studies and a focus on the experiences and perceptions of headteachers within this paradigm are highlighted before discussing where the research aim and questions arose. A summary of the methodology and research design follows. An overview of key findings across the case studies is presented and discussed, before a brief indication is provided of the analysis of the findings.

1.1.1 Research Aim and Associated Research Questions
The overall aim of this study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of primary headteacher SQH graduates in their early years of headship situating a distributed perspective on leadership in their schools, as promoted by school leadership literature, national policy and the SQH programme. Five key and one ancillary research question arose from the literature review, an overview of which is provided later. The research questions were:

- What do primary headteachers understand as distributed leadership?
- What do primary headteachers identify as the key characteristics of distributed leadership if they believe it to be embedded in the practice of their particular schools?
- To what extent, in the opinion of staff, do those characteristics currently operate in their particular schools?
- How do those primary headteachers think those characteristics have come about? (e.g. naturally and/or purposely planned for)
- What do primary headteachers (and their staff) perceive as the benefits
and/or problems arising from operating a distributed perspective in practice?

- What implications, if any, are there for leadership development with particular reference to the SQH programme?

1.2 Contextual Background to the Study

This study explores the experiences and perceptions of primary headteachers as they take forward a distributed perspective on school leadership and management. As discussed further within the methodology and research design chapter, specific criteria were used in the selection of the three headteachers. All three were heads of primary schools within the same local authority having been subject to the same recruitment and selection criteria and procedures, theoretically at least. All three were in the early years of headship. All were SQH graduates, having been conferred with both a Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Leadership and Management (PG Dip L&M) by The University of Edinburgh, and the professional award of the SQH by the Scottish Government (SG), having met the competences of the Standard for Headship (SfH) (SEED, 2005).

The programme leading to the SQH is premised around critical reflection on the theory of educational leadership and management in and on work-based practice. Speculatively, the headteachers were familiar with the policy frame and had been exposed to clear expectations that SQH participants take forward a distributed perspective. In theory at least, they were considered to have a good understanding of what a distributed perspective comprised in relation to their own practice. Prior to engagement with the study, each headteacher articulated a commitment to a distributed perspective on leadership in their schools, as promoted by school leadership literature, national policy, the SfH and the SQH programme.

Interest at the heart of the research aim arose from the researcher’s work, in large part related to the SQH, as programme director of the Masters in Educational Leadership and Management. A wider interest in this area related to involvement at national level and concern about the potential leadership crisis faced by Scottish schools involving the high proportion of headteachers due to retire over the next 10 years. Coupled with that, was the concern for the relatively small numbers seeking and successfully undertaking professional development opportunities afforded by the SQH. This situation is not unique to Scotland (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2008), being reflected across the United Kingdom (UK), Western European countries
(Bush, 2008a) and other advanced economies across the globe such as North America, Canada and Australia. It has led to a national, indeed international focus on succession planning to include the building of organisational leadership capacity and individual’s leadership confidence through distributed leadership (Gunter and Rayner, 2007; Hargreaves, 2008; Harris et al., 2007; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006). In that regard, there is a role to be played through leadership development programmes to support the professional development of school leaders.

1.2.1 My Role and Matters of Bias and Reflexivity

As programme director, I have a strategic leadership and management role as well as tutor role. I am very closely associated with the SQH being the only consistent staff member since the revised programme was introduced in 2005. Indeed, although constantly evolving through the influence of a range of people (not least experience of working with the participants themselves), I remained responsible for writing the materials and devising the learning opportunities for the programme. The advantage of that association is that I have a very good understanding of the postgraduate experience the sample headteachers bring to this study. The obvious disadvantage relates to bias which I appreciate could not be eliminated. As such, I have been mindful of the need to employ reflexivity, being vigilant of the assumptions brought to the research from my own role and any associated bias. My role also brings with it a potential lack of objectivity, for example in my understandings of the SQH and what I might expect the sample headteacher to bring to the study. As discussed later in the thesis, there were further potential issues relating to informed consent with headteachers who might feel obliged to participate and to provide ‘the right answers’ to the empirical aspects of the study.

From the outset, I have remained vigilant to bias creeping in and acknowledged where it may have occurred (Bell, 1993; Goodson and Sikes, 2001), paying keen attention to my characteristics as the interviewer, the characteristics of respondents, and the substantive content of the questions (Cohen et al., 2006). However, interviewing is unavoidably collaborative and, as such, it is almost impossible to eliminate all bias (Holstein and Curium, 2004). The norms and values arising from my professional experience and professional interests (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) as well as from my own life experience will be reflected in my interpretations
Issues relating to role and reflexivity are explored in detail in the methodology and research design chapter.

1.2.2 Contextual Background to the SQH Programme
(Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Leadership and Management)

As discussed in Torrance (in press), the SQH derived from a 1997 Labour Party manifesto commitment to develop a mandatory pre-appointment headteacher qualification. Introduced in 1998 first as a pilot and then as a national programme, the SQH was at the cutting edge of worldwide development since, with the exception of North America, there were very few programmes of its type in existence (Brundrett and Crawford, 2008; Hallinger, 2003a). In the decades prior to the introduction of the SQH and Chartered Teacher programmes, postgraduate courses were broadly designed to be and perceived as ‘academic’. However, by the early 1990s, there was a growing acceptance that skills developed in the workplace should be seen as an integrated part of academic programmes (Brundrett, 2010; Golby, 1994). The challenge was to design and deliver programmes addressing the professional needs of teachers whilst maintaining academic rigour (Black et al., 1994). This prompted the development of masters' programmes in education that blended formalised provision with professional experience, individualised development and academic qualification (Brundrett, 2010; Davies and Ellison, 1994). The SQH challenged conventions in respect to postgraduate study, pushing the boundaries of higher education institutions, in part due to the degree of accreditation for prior experiential learning and the emphasis on work-based learning.

An important element of the SQH initiative was the emphasis placed on partnership between employers and universities (O'Brien and Draper, 2001). Each of the three initial 'consortia' approved by the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) comprised a collaborative partnership between Local Authorities (LAs) and at least one University. That partnership enabled colleagues to work in a unique manner to oversee, deliver and develop the programme. It ensured dialogue and mutual consideration of the operational priorities of the employer, as well as the concerns of university staff to situate current Scottish practice in a broader literature and academic framework. Revised in 2005, each consortium introduced key changes born through experience of working with the programme, situated within specific local contexts.
The SQH programme is intended to offer a powerful model of professional learning, combining theoretical and practical approaches through ‘workplace learning’ (Reeves et al., 2002). Premised on a set of design principles underpinned by research into professional learning (see Torrance, 2011 and in press), the SQH emphasises ‘process knowledge’ through critical reflection on, in and for practice, drawing from external perspectives and continuous formative feedback to facilitate learning, leading to influence on practice in order to make a real difference in schools. The learning and assessment activities were designed to make connections between the personal and professional context of the individual, the policy context in Scotland and the conceptual and research framework written up in the international literature on school leadership and management, and professional development (Torrance, in press). Based on a programme utilising work-based action learning projects to address a professional standard in Scotland (SfH, 1998 & 2005), one of the original principles underpinning the SQH was its contribution towards developing the school sector. By taking forward the professional development opportunities afforded by the programme, participants contribute to school improvement and school culture (Cowie, 2008), developing their practice within school contexts.

The SQH has been held in high regard (Menter et al., 2003). The manner in which the programme led to both a postgraduate and professional award represented a ‘unique experiment’ (O’Brien, Murphy and Draper, 2003: 65). The SQH has been recognised at international level by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2007: 140; 39; 15) as being ‘world class’, ‘of international significance’ and ‘an outstanding and demanding programme’.

1.2.3 Problems Encountered by Some SQH Participants in Taking Forward a Distributed Perspective on Leadership

SQH participants are encouraged to adopt a distributed perspective on leadership and management through taking forward an eighteen-month work-based school improvement project. That project is designed by each participant to progress contextualised school improvement, across the five professional actions of the SfH (leading and managing learning and teaching; leading and developing people; leading change and improvement; using resources effectively; building community) as well as the three essential elements (strategic vision, values and aims;
knowledge and understanding; personal qualities and interpersonal skills). Encouragement of a distributed perspective is situated within the expectations underpinning the competences of the SfH, problematised within the literature review. The Standard, for example, refers to collegiality, building leadership capacity and effective delegation. Currently, SQH participants are exposed to some of the ‘big ideas’ within the distributed leadership literature with an expectation they ground theory in their own practice and in the contextual practice of their schools. In Course 1, leadership as distinct from management is introduced. In Course 2, participants explore the leadership styles and processes at play within their school context as part of a school analysis. In Course 4, distributed leadership as a concept is formally introduced through a presentation, a workshop activity based on progress to date with ‘leading and developing people’ and later, through a study session. In Course 5, participants analyse and present evidence of their ability to distribute leadership in the process of taking forward school improvement initiatives, in relation to the competences contained within the SfH.

Given the expectations placed on SQH participants and the self-interest they have for meeting those expectations, one could surmise that they are at the forefront of incorporating the theory of distributed leadership into practice. Indeed, experience of working with aspirant headteachers progressing through the SQH suggests there are both extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors for participants taking forward a distributed perspective. However, despite a clear expectation to engage colleagues in a distributed perspective, feedback gathered from the first cohort of participants graduating from the revised SQH identified that a number of participants encounter a range of tensions within their work-based school contexts (Torrance, 2009). Although not necessarily the case for all participants, that finding suggests that despite the policy discourse and expectations, a distributed perspective on leadership is not firmly embedded in school practice. It also suggests that neither literature nor policy explores the problematic nature of distributed leadership sufficiently or the complexities involved in taking forward a distributed perspective. It would also appear that the SQH does not adequately problematise the nature of distributed leadership, or the multiple and often contradictory policy drivers positioning a distributed perspective.
1.3 Relevance of the Study and Contribution to the Field

In seeking to understand the experiences and perceptions of primary headteacher SQH graduates in their early years of headship situating a distributed perspective on leadership in their schools, it is hoped that this study makes a modest contribution to the field. Much of the current literature in this area is theoretical or aspirational (Leithwood *et al.*, 2009a and 2009c). Contemporary policy is aspirational rather than evidence based. Through an empirical study, understandings of this paradigm are grounded in school practice. Enhancing empirical understandings contributes to knowledge and in turn, potentially informs policy in this area. Through knowledge transfer, the study’s findings and conclusions contribute to the continual development of leadership preparation programmes at the University at which it is based. In so doing, due to the work-based nature of those programmes, the study contributes to school leadership practice in Scotland.

The main conclusion to this study, that distributed leadership is still ‘in the gift of the headteacher’, contributes to a limited empirical knowledge base, suggesting key recommendations for policy makers, school leaders at all levels, leadership development programmes, theoretical development and future research. Currently, there is a dearth of studies into the experiences and perceptions of headteachers within this area, even more so in terms of those within their early years of headship. This study contributes to understandings of the problematic nature of a distributed perspective on leadership.

1.4 Overview of the Policy Context

The policy context in Scotland is not always explored in its entirety. The focus on SQH graduate headteachers and the location of distributed leadership within the case studies’ schools makes a detailed exploration of the policy context necessary. As such, a chapter is given over to mapping out global influences on the policy context for Scottish education. A number of key factors brought influence to bear on the current drive to distribute leadership in the UK and more specifically, Scottish schools. These are explored further within the policy context chapter.

It will be argued that the key driver behind that policy is globalisation in relation to the interconnections among economies, the assumed link between the performance of education systems and economic prosperity, the belief in market mechanisms as
a way to stimulate educational improvements accompanied by new public management with characteristics of performance indicators and quality assurance systems and associated standards and competencies. In line with new managerialism, the role of the headteacher changed, becoming increasingly complex. Within that policy frame, specifics of the Scottish context are discussed, along with historical aspects related to policy formation such as workforce reform, and the motivations of competing policy makers and policy enforces. Competing forces along with different conceptions are explored in the ‘push’ behind distributed leadership.

Approaches from other countries, particularly North America and Canada have been adopted instead of empirical UK evidence being sought in search of a solution or panacea to issues related to governance, the perceived leadership crisis and restructuring of the promoted posts in schools (particularly secondary schools). Confusion in the policy discourse can also be found in the literature, explored through the literature review. The emergence of leadership as a significant feature of school improvement is evident in key policy documents, explored in the policy context chapter. Nationally, the political will for distributed leadership in schools is clear. The policy direction and policy documents are full of the rhetoric of distributed leadership. It forms the popular discourse of contemporary school education literature. The formal structures are in place to facilitate distributed leadership in schools, flatter management structures being designed to promote collegiate practices, but it is not clear to what effect.

1.5 Overview of the Literature Review
The literature review is structured under four chapters. First, the genealogy of the field of educational leadership is explored as a contested area. Conceptual understandings of the underpinning field provide a basis for later theoretical and empirical discussion. Indeed, distributed leadership has been central to how the field itself has developed. Second, the broader aspect of school leadership is explored, explaining and problematising the positioning of leadership above management in the literature and policy discourse. Privileging leadership as distinct from management can create specific tensions in practice, returned to in the analysis of the research findings. Third, distributed leadership is explored as a distinct perspective on educational leadership and management. The review of relevant
literature is structured in relation to the first five research questions. Throughout, key limitations in the underlying theoretical assumptions for a distributed perspective are highlighted. Fourth, teacher leadership is explored as a distinct yet integral aspect of the distributed leadership paradigm. The development and positioning of the term teacher leadership is traced. Key limitations in the teacher leadership theory pertaining to this study are explored throughout.

There is both significant confusion and competing understandings of commonly used terminology within the leadership literature generally and the distributed leadership literature more specifically. Many of the leadership models promoted have developed from the business world with particular perspectives on people management within ‘for profit organisations’. Distributed leadership is often presented as a homogeneous style of leadership instead of a heterogeneous perspective, a varifocal lens through which different levels or degrees of distributed leadership become apparent.

Within the public sector, there is limited literature available relating to distributed leadership (Brookes, 2008). Distributed leadership has begun to reach into the field of health and social care, through public sector reform and the drive to revive perceived poor performance in public sector organizations, and the effort to engage staff in collaborative learning and problem-solving (Currie and Lockett, 2011). Although growing in response to increased complexity and ambiguity (Fitzsimons et al., 2011), the interest into and exploration of distributed leadership within the field of school education is not yet reflected in the field of management and business (Bolden, 2011; Thorpe et al., 2011). Having originally derived its understandings of management and subsequently of leadership from the field of management and business, it would appear that the field of management and business is now deriving its understandings of distributed leadership from the field of education (Bolden, 2011; Currie and Lockett, 2011; and Thorpe et al., 2011).

Within the educational leadership literature, although much has been published, relatively little appears to be based on the analysis of data generated in schools (Harris et al., 2007). Much of the distributed leadership literature lacks empirical substance (Leithwood et al., 2004). Few studies have explored this area to a depth of understanding with the actors involved, to work out what is happening in reality,
how those actors make sense of school leadership and what role different actors play within distributed leadership. Such is the focus of this study for which very little is known in terms of how headteachers make sense of taking forward a distributed perspective. And yet, throughout the literature, time and time again the headteacher’s role emerges as key. By their very nature, existing studies including this one tend to be small-scale.

1.6 Overview of the Methodology and Research Design
This study marks a clear departure from much of the research within the field to date, as does the design of the research methods. The study was designed to explore understandings of a distributed perspective on leadership within a small number of primary schools. It set out to investigate how the actors within those schools make sense of distributed leadership with a particular focus on a sequence of four interviews conducted with each headteacher. Methods designed to elicit a depth of insight were adopted, getting at actors’ understandings through the headteachers. A more general view was provided from a range of actors through a 360° analysis questionnaire and sociometric analysis. The research employed interpretative enquiry with aspects of a grounded approach; multi-methods emphasised qualitative methods. A detailed description of the methodology and methods is provided in chapter seven.

The purposive sample was selected to provide insights from a group marginalised in the limited number of empirical studies conducted to date. The primary headteachers, as SQH graduates, were also selected as they were considered to have an informed understanding of distributed leadership. Each articulated a commitment to a distributed perspective within their own practice and the practice of their schools. Primary headteachers in post for around two years were selected as the literature review suggested that there were key implications for different phases of headship and that this sample might be very productive in terms of eliciting the experiences of headteachers during a phase when they would be conscious of growing into the role and developing their leadership style(s), having had sufficient time to establish relationships with staff. The purposive sample involved raised a number of ethical issues considered before, during and after the research period. These are discussed in detail within the methodology and research design chapter, permeating explicitly and implicitly throughout most chapters of this thesis.
The sample is small and appropriate to the methodology and methods. Any claims to knowledge arising from the study reflect the sample size since the findings have clear limitations and could not claim to be representative (Silverman, 2005). The findings summarised below and explored in detail in the findings chapters could have relevance to a similar population group.

1.7 Overview of the Findings and Discussion
Each of the headteachers reported having taken up post in schools unaccustomed to distributed leadership, having previously had traditional hierarchical headteachers. Over a matter of two to three years, they had purposefully sought to engage staff in leadership processes. There was no blueprint to follow and the influence of school context was ever present. What guided the headteachers was a firm and articulated commitment to a distributed leadership perspective, grounded on theory and experience of school practice, their own and others. They were driven internally rather than by pressure from policy. However, in managing the extensive workload of headship, they understood that to have a strategic role and to focus on the development of staff to take forward embedded school improvement, staff leadership roles were key. They did not anticipate school improvement to be an easy process and worked hard to engage staff in that process. They were critically reflective of their own practice and had learned hard lessons along the way.

The findings identified that each of the three headteachers was committed to a distributed perspective based on their values, understandings and experiences. They were centrally concerned with developing effective processes for engaging staff in school improvement for the benefit of pupils. Despite their commitment, a distributed perspective did not develop naturally nor easily. It was purposefully planned for and continuously supported by each headteacher. It involved the balancing of multiple and competing accountabilities. It also involved the development of teacher professional identity to encompass a school leadership role. The headteachers articulated tensions related to their intentions to engage staff, which could be interpreted as knowing how to elicit the best efforts of their staff, ‘new managerialist’ strategies or even manipulation.
An overall positive picture of the benefits arising from operating a distributed perspective was reflected in the headteachers’ and staff responses, although there was recognition of problems encountered. The influence of staff in both formal and informal leadership positions emerged. So too did the importance of cooperative working arrangements to build positive regard between staff members. Different patterns and degrees of distributed leadership were identified which varied depending on purpose. Differences and tensions were also identified in the extent and nature of distributed leadership with teaching and support staff. Different patterns of distribution emerged in relation to whether staff occupied formal or informal roles. Distributed leadership did not negate the central leadership role of the headteacher and where present and to a lesser extent, the depute headteacher role. Rather, each headteacher played a centrally important role encouraging, facilitating and actively developing a distributed perspective on school leadership and management.

1.8 Overview of the Analysis of the Findings

The first five research questions are returned to as a means of structuring the analysis of the findings chapter. Six themes emerged from an analysis across the three case study findings:

- The context specific nature of distributed leadership;
- The socially constructed nature of distributed leadership;
- The negotiated nature of distributed leadership;
- The hierarchical nature of distributed leadership;
- The taken for granted assumptions within a distributed perspective; and
- Distributed leadership was to large extent ‘in the gift of the headteacher’.

Each of those themes is explored in detail in chapter eleven. The sixth theme was dominant. The central role of the headteacher in actively encouraging, enabling and facilitating distributed leadership at individual and whole staff levels emerged strongly. However, the headteachers generally found it difficult to articulate just how they encouraged and enabled distributed leadership. The narrative interview approach was key, supporting them to reach a depth of reflection.

Distributed leadership was found to be multi-faceted, involving those in both formal and informal leadership positions, and involving teaching and support staff to
differing extents. In taking forward a distributed perspective, the headteachers of this study strove to know each member of staff, to build their trust and communicate a vision for the school and in so doing, encourage and enable staff to engage in leaderly behaviours. This was, however, by no means an uncontested area and the headteachers were aware of steering a careful course, guided by their professional values rather than a blueprint for effective practice. Despite this, tensions and surprises arose. The headteachers, although reporting that knowing their staff was key to successful distributed leadership, articulated learning more about how distributed leadership operated within their schools through participation in the study.

Five generally held assumptions were challenged through the analysis of the findings: that every member of staff is able to lead; that every member of staff wishes to lead; that the leadership role of staff is legitimized simply by the headteacher’s endorsement; that a distributed perspective occurs naturally; and that a distributed perspective is unproblematic.

1.9 Overview of the Conclusions

Contemporary Scottish policy documents use the terms collegiality, distributed, distributive and shared leadership interchangeably. Beyond the policy rhetoric, the primary school headteachers within this study were making their own sense of distributed leadership in order to engage staff in school improvement processes. The methodology and research methods were successful in eliciting a depth of understanding of a distributed perspective from the case study headteachers’ perspective, informed by the views of their staff. However, a number of methodological challenges were encountered as explained in the final chapter.

A contribution is felt to have been made to existing theoretical knowledge through the identification of various conceptual confusions surrounding distributed leadership and their root causes. A further contribution is felt to have been made to the limited existing empirical knowledge. In relation to those, a contribution is felt to have been made to the design and delivery of leadership preparation programmes through problematising the nature of distributed leadership, alongside the multiple and often contradictory policy drivers positioning a distributed perspective. Moreover, this study potentially contributes to other public sector, and management and business
fields, currently drawing their understandings of a distributed perspective from the field of education.

Although similar to the approaches used by Spillane (see for example Spillane and Diamond, 2007; Spillane, and Coldren, 2011), this study’s focus and its methods differed, resulting in different insights and additional findings. Two specific examples are provided here. The first relates to the role of support staff within a distributed perspective, not evident in the literature. The second relates the headteachers’ experiences and perceptions of a distributed perspective along with their intended purpose and tensions encountered. Much more is still to be discovered and recommendations in that regard are made in the conclusions chapter. A reconceptualisation of school leadership generally and the headteacher role specifically is called for, along with a re-examination of the leadership roles of others within the school organization.

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter began by explaining why defining distributed leadership proves problematic before identifying the aim of this small-scale empirical research and the context that aim arose within. The relevance of the study and its contribution to limited theoretical and empirical understandings of the problematic nature of a distributed perspective were highlighted. The logical design of the thesis was laid out with justification for the inclusion of each chapter and a brief overview for each provided.

The next chapter takes as its focus the policy context within which a distributed perspective is situated. Together with the genealogy chapter, the policy context chapter strengthens the thesis by identifying a number of significant changes to the Scottish education system, helping to situate the researcher’s and case study headteachers’ understandings of a distribute perspective, building the case for the originality of the research and its findings. In so doing, sense is brought to bear on the confusion surrounding distributed leadership and its positioning in policy, headship preparation and school leadership practice.
Chapter Two: The Policy Context

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the policy context within which distributed leadership has been positioned, progressing a political agenda. An understanding of that positioning helps to explain why distributed leadership has become the focus of contemporary Scottish education policy. The origins of distributed leadership in political and policy contexts are traced to a depth feasible within the scope of this study. The subsequent literature review chapters take that argument forward, further problematising a distributed perspective on leadership and management. The theoretical underpinning of distributed leadership is challenged. It is argued that its theoretical construction has been artificial.

This chapter is structured into eight parts. First, the global policy context is explored. It is argued that the emergence of distributed leadership was an inevitable consequence of the global shift to devolve school governance, coupled with workforce reform. Second, the UK policy context is explored, with increased compliance, changes to the governance of schools and to the headteacher role. Third, the Scottish policy context is explored, with its distinct educational ideology, legislation and policy milieu. The global school improvement movement, with associated devolved responsibility to schools within a compliance culture, resulted in key changes to the headteacher role.

Fourth, education policy development is explored, with global influences lying behind the spread of distributed leadership. It is argued that distributed leadership was aligned to Scottish democratic principles of distributed justice and accepted as competent by the government and policy community. Fifth, the influence of research on education policy development is explored. The search for solutions-focused research, the endorsement of applied research and the out of proportion influence of HMIE are discussed. Sixth, the effects of workforce reform are explored. It will be argued that distributed leadership was positioned in policy discourse to advance workforce reform, address the headteacher recruitment and retention crisis, and progress the school improvement agenda.
Seventh, the rise of distributed leadership within Scottish education policy is discussed. The normative and aspirational positioning of a distributed perspective, along with a range of associated tensions is explored further through the literature review chapters, analysis of the findings and thesis conclusion. Eighth, the political endorsement of headship preparation is explored, the three case study headteachers being SQH graduates. An overview of the programme’s key features is provided, the location of a distributed perspective is discussed, the problematic nature of a standards based approach to leadership preparation, utilising government endorsed discourse is acknowledged.

2.2 The Global Policy Context

As shall be seen in subsequent chapters, distributed leadership arose indirectly from the field of management, developing as an inevitable consequence of the devolved governance of schools, coupled with workforce reform, situated within a global trend. Globalisation, with its weakening of a nation state’s capacity for governance (Rhodes, 1997), has been behind the drive for new public management in the UK to transform institutions and society (Giddens, 1998).

The stability gained from global markets and political cooperation came with a cost – political and economic compromise. Globalisation saw advanced industrial countries such as Britain with large-scale welfare programmes, presented with increased financial and management problems (Freeman, 2006). The market economy gained strength over socialist principles. In opening up to a less predictable world economy, Britain potentially exposed itself to international economic factors such as employment levels, which the welfare state could not be expected to be wholly responsible. Britain moved from a position of artificially determined wages and powerful trade union negotiations, to one heavily influenced by global opportunity, risk and profit.

Greater expectations were placed on government funded services, emphasising effectiveness and efficiency, whilst delivering high quality service. For education, particularly in England, that meant the introduction of league tables, inspection and competition, followed by a centrally controlled national curriculum, national assessments, target setting, appraisal (Bell, 2007) and a culture of mistrust.


2.3 The UK Policy Context

From 1975, growth in the UK welfare state was restrained, in response to national and international political and economic circumstances (Pierson, 1991) such as the oil crisis, and poor economic performance blamed on education (Bell, 2007). British Labour Party policies of the 60s and 70s such as ‘collectivism’ were deemed to have failed, conceptions of the relationship between markets and state having not been updated (Brown, 2003: 267). Through concurrent deregulation and centralisation, the UK Conservative governments of 1979-1997 legislated to fragment state monopolies, including state education, in order to encourage consumer choice, remove state subsidy and ensure competition (Byrne and Ozga, 2006). For education, linked to a decreasing pupil population, that also led to school closures and teacher redundancies (Bell, 2007).

The New Labour government ‘abandoned the old social-democratic dream of mastering or transcending capitalism’ (Marquand, 2004: 52). Far from rebuffing the moves of the previous Conservative governments towards consumerism, private-sector managerialism and mercerisation, New Labour continued those policy developments. New Labour remained faithful to social-democratic principles of citizenship, equity and service, through reforms aimed at harnessing private sector resources for public sector benefit, securing efficiency and best value within a world economy and global market (Marquand, 2004). New Labour’s commitment to social justice in pursuit of a stronger economy and fairer society could be interpreted as a positive driver for devolved governance, leading to distributing leadership to and within schools. However, such principles were at odds with the effects of wider economic and political influences and the search for solutions to ‘identified workforce deficiencies’ (Gunter, 2012: 1).

In England and Wales, the Education Reform Act of 1988 introduced a more competitive, ‘quasi-market approach’ to resources allocated to education (Bartlett, 1993: 125; Paterson, 2003a), within which increased parental choice of schools (strengthened from provision within the 1980 Act) directly impacted on a school’s budget, allocated in relation to its pupil role (Bell, 2007). Parents could vote to make their school ‘grant maintained’ and in so doing, schools could determine how they spent their budgets, with much greater freedom from Local Education Authority (LEA) influence, the counter-balance of a school’s governing body being held more
accountable for managing its school’s finances. Grant maintained schools could apply to change their status, becoming selective instead of comprehensive. New Labour continued the policy direction inherited from the Conservative New Right government (Bell, 2007).

The White Paper of July 1992 encouraged more schools in England and Wales to opt out of Local Education Authority (LEA) control with incentives such as additional capital funding, independently agreed employment contracts and the arguable advantage of a further weakening of the role of the LEA (Bartlett, 1993). The disadvantages encountered by schools, however, included an increase in time and cost for administration related matters, along with a change in time and task workload for governors, and an increasingly selective admissions policy in certain schools with an associated increase in inequality of choice/opportunity (Bartlett, 1993). When Labour came to power in 1997 it re-established, to an extent, the LEA role for grant maintained schools whilst endorsing the autonomy those schools had (Paterson, 2003a).

One way in which New Labour differed from the previous Conservative regime was in the constitutional changes leading to devolution in Scotland and (to a lesser extent) Wales. In turn, that imposed limits on the influence of Westminster whilst initiating opportunities for further civic engagement (Marquand, 2004). This could be interpreted as part of a shift from direct government to indirect governance, ‘a differentiated polity’ (Rhodes, 1997: 24). Or, in part, be seen as a response to a general acceptance that centralised planning failed to deliver levels of prosperity and consumption compared to capitalist economics (Hirst, 1997). In contrast, central control was tightened through the continuation of new managerial private sector initiatives on public sector practice such as targets, performance indicators and league tables – oddly, controls employed to ensure central planning does indeed work (Hirst, 1997). Despite the image publicly portrayed, no government has a unified ideology (Paterson, 2003a). Moreover, in 1992, after its fourth consecutive defeat, the Labour party had one objective, ‘to regain power at virtually any cost’, ‘standing still offer[ed] the certainty of defeat’ (Sassoon, 1996: 739; 754). Old Labour was out, New Labour was in. Labour’s education policy differed from previous Conservative policies in three key ways (Paterson, 2003a: 165):
a renovated version of social liberalism, a form of weak developmentalism, and a type of new social democracy that is in the mainstream of European thinking on the left.

In addition to previously discussed central controls, the introduction of the National Curriculum represented the most significant centralising force in England and Wales (Paterson, 2003a), assuring that what was taught was standardised and tested, reducing diversity between schools. Headteachers were charged with ensuring adherence to its principles and practice. Labour continued the Conservatives’ endorsement of the charismatic head, capable of turning around ‘failing schools’. Labour went further, introducing interventionist education policies. New school management was imposed where an LEA was deemed to be ineffective at resolving chronic difficulties. ‘Failing LEAs’ were required to hand over their educational activities to private sector contractors (Paterson, 2003a).

In England, such high stakes accountability had significant impact on the role of the headteacher and on perceptions of that role. Finite national resources were devolved to schools, along with accountability for ensuring their effective use. Central government distanced itself from responsibility for the deployment of resources. Heavily prescriptive top-down change was introduced, particularly in relation to a National Curriculum, reducing the risk of devolved responsibility. Headteachers were tasked with driving forward change. The headteacher arguably enjoyed more freedom from central control, in striking contrast to the degree of public accountability for ensuring centrally determined school reform was implemented, and impacted on attainment figures.

The role of the headteacher changed. The management of operational resources was no longer considered sufficient. Leadership, with its strategic deployment of vision and perceived influencing effects, became a necessary requirement of the role. Centrally driven change plus changes to teacher contracts brought the need and mechanism for distributing leadership. The charismatic headteacher was expected to rally the troops and deliver results. Distributed leadership provided a way of engaging others in implementing government-endorsed change. New Labour invoked ‘a period of rampant adjectival leadership’ (Gunter, 2012: 3).

2.4 The Scottish Policy Context
In Scotland, the drive behind distributed leadership since the turn of the century can
be traced through legislation and public policy. Whilst the education systems of developed countries across the globe like Scotland and England share a number of features, the Scottish picture is distinct. Global travelling policies have been mediated by embedded Scottish practices and cultures (Gunter, 2006; Ozga, 2005; Lingard and Ozga, 2007; Paterson, 2003b: 30):

*the institutional legacy through which Scottish democratic reform has taken place leaves a very specifically Scottish ideology of education, even though the process of democratisation and of inheriting institutions may be much the same everywhere.*

Education is generally regarded as one of the three key elements comprising Scottish national identity. The legal system and Church of Scotland comprise the other two (Humes, 2007; Ozga and Jones, 2006). The independence of the Scottish education, legal and church systems was part of the negotiated Union between Scotland and England in 1707 (Paterson, 1997).

There are marked differences between the education systems north and south of the Scottish Border (Bryce and Humes, 2003a: 4): *'The important point is that while Scotland is a part of Europe, it is not part of England'.* Even the education policies of the Thatcher Government, perceived as an attempt to Anglicise Scottish education, were unsuccessful. The insignificant number of Conservative MPs in Scotland failed to provide the necessary legitimacy. In the Scottish system, policy was formed through the influential Scottish Education Department (SED), part of the then Scottish Office, with two main branches, the civil service and the HM inspectorate (Paterson, 1997). The Scottish Education Department (SED) negotiated policy implementation with the professional education community through local government, and most notable of the teacher representatives, the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS). At its best, practice worked to inform policy. At its worst, HMI was one of the key players through devising then monitoring, evaluating and reporting on policy implementation – rather than evaluating the suitability of policy itself. That said, the Scottish HMI was much less confrontational than its English counterpart, Ofsted.

The divergence in policy development continued after Labour’s election in 1997, increasing since 1999, as a result of the Labour and Liberal Democrats coalition forming the Scottish Government (SG). Policy and practice in Scotland traditionally had a slower pace of change, through engagement with the teaching profession
(Paterson, 2003a; 2003b). Furthermore, power was devolved to headteachers rather than parents. There was no national appetite for schools to become ‘grant maintained’. In the 1990s, the curriculum evolved separately from the English ‘National Curriculum’ into a series of 5-14 broad curricular guidelines, promoting continuity and progression, safeguarding the professional standing of teachers deciding on specific content and delivery, with national tests promoted as confirming teachers’ professional judgment.

Historically, Scottish education was held in high regard, valued by the public and by politicians (Lingard and Ozga, 2007; Paterson, 2003b), supportive of the comprehensive secondary system. The teaching profession was held in higher regard than south of the border (Munn et al., 2004; Paterson, 2003a), confirmed in 2002 through the National Debate On Schools for the 21st Century in Scotland and the concurrent Parliamentary Committee of Enquiry (arising from the cross-party Education Committee) concluding: ‘there was no support for radical change’ (Munn et al., 2004: 450). This was in stark contrast to the outcomes of the English Great Debate of 1976-77 (Bell, 2007). There was, however, a clear concern about the key purposes of the curriculum, the nature of comprehensive education and how the curriculum could meet the needs of all pupils. Unsurprisingly since 2002, the main government educational priority has been the development of a new national 3-18 Curriculum for Excellence, perhaps at the expense of policy direction for the strategic leadership of schools.

Scotland’s unique history and political context has ‘protected’ itself from the sharp end of many recent English education policy developments, developing at its own pace (Gunter, 2006). However, Scotland has not been altogether removed from the effects of globalisation, facing its own policy development tensions, swept along with the trend of ‘micro-economic measurement systems’ (Power, 2004: 767) including audits and performance measures/targets, and subsequent second-order measures. In Scotland, the impact of global influence was ‘mediated by the nature of the educational system and the social and political interests that maintain it’ (Lauder et al., 2006: 45). A slower, locally relevant development of policy could be perceived a strength. Lack of strategic direction and fragmented policy could not. Neither could the generation of contested understandings (Reeves, 2005).
The relatively small size of Scotland and the relative autonomy many of its national bodies enjoy might suggest policy change would be comparatively straightforward. Policy making, in the main, happens within relatively bounded systems. Government retains more power, controlling networks of influence, legislation and funding. In the governance of Scotland, a policy network has been in place for generations, with the then SED (now SG) its ‘core executive’ (Rhodes, 1997: 14). However, prior to the establishment of the Scottish Parliament, there was lack of cohesion to education policy making in Scotland (Humes, 2003). That resulted in ‘implementation gaps’ and ‘policy mess’ (Rhodes, 1997: 4), arising as a consequence of policy making not being a linear process, but rather recursive, the result of unintended consequences of interventions. Policy networks (Rhodes, 1997) defined limits to participation in the policy process, defined actors’ roles, decided the policy agenda, shaped the behaviour of actors, privileged specific interests and exchanged private government for public accountability.

Many in the education field welcomed Scottish devolution. It was argued self-governance would bring about democracy, greater parliamentary effectiveness, more relevant policy, more relevant scrutiny and debate, rebuilding the unity of Scottish education (Paterson, 2008). Social justice formed a cornerstone of the Scottish Parliament. There was potential for moving beyond the self-interest of individuals or interest groups (Ozga and Jones, 2006: 14). However, as with other devolved administrations, although the rhetoric was of local autonomy, the reality was of central control (Woods and Freeman, 2002). Moreover, there was no clearly identified ‘map for the future’ (Peters, 2003: 1034) setting out the strategic direction of Scottish education based on sound understanding of the broad social, political and economic forces shaping the world.

During the first eight years of the Scottish parliament, under a Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition, there were eight school level education bills, compared to two education bills between 1980 and 1996 when Westminster had responsibility for Scottish education. Each of those eight bills contributed to a more devolved and school based decision-making context whilst creating a degree of ambiguity in relation to governance as ‘Local Authorities had the statutory duty. Directors of education were personally liable should something go wrong. The Minister of Education had the power but not the responsibility’ (Aitken, 2008: 154). Interest
groups within the Scottish policy network continued to work to protect their own vested interests. Organizations were relatively cautious and slow to change, learning largely according to what they knew already (Simon, 1991). That contributed to a lack of policy cohesion on the one hand and a vacuum filled by HMIE on the other, made easier by changes in legislation.

Changes to legislation were reflected in the revised *How Good Is Our School* (HMIE 2002, further revised in June 2005). Emphasis was placed on planning for improvement with a new requirement for heads to involve various interested parties in planning and implementing the school development plan. A similar tension to that experienced in England arose, whereby a top-down directed approach was in contrast to a bottom-up empowered planning model – devolved governance with greater accountability measures. Accountability was multiple rather than singular. Schools were required to reconcile local priorities with national developments and their frequently associated timescales often enshrined in legislation, LA service improvement priorities and SG initiatives. Funding timeframes resulting in potential bureaucratic compliance. The enhanced collegiate decision-making role afforded to teachers through TP21 (SEED, 2001) potentially resulted in conflict if teachers chose not to support LA or national priorities.

There were two moments in Scottish education history when the grip of HMIE was potentially weakened. The first occurred after the emergency inquiry into the running of the Scottish Qualifications Authority following the near collapse of the examination system in 2000. HMI was speedily removed from having any responsibility for policy making, only possible through the Scottish Parliament’s devolved powers. Having responsibility for policy formation was in potential conflict with an independent evaluation of its implementation (Paterson, 2008). This led to a period of lack of strategic leadership, as Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) was born and sought to establish itself within an already established policy network. HMIE seemed reluctant to relinquish its strategic role and was accomplished in the manner in which it filled the policy vacuum, continuing to dominate policy discourse in school improvement, introducing the term distributive leadership to professional parlance. Leadership was often used to describe management activities, a theme returned to in later chapters. HMIE (2006b: foreword) changed the emphasis of its discourse to focus more on leadership as a ‘key driver for improvement’ rather than
the headteacher’s role. At the same time as promoting a distributed perspective, HMIE (2006a: 95) continued to emphasise the role of the headteacher, reinforcing a compliance culture: ‘heads need to ensure that self-evaluation leads to improvement in provision’.

The second moment when the grip of HMIE was potentially weakened occurred with the outcomes of The Crerar Review (SG, 2007) which considered external scrutiny as an essential function in the system of governance, accountability and complaints handling for Scottish public services. It concluded that organisations themselves should have primary responsibility for improving services, recognising the SG’s intention to devolve greater responsibility for managing and monitoring services and to streamline reporting processes, in part to make best use of finite national resources. In the case of HMIE, this led to the introduction of a revised, proportionate and reduced inspection model. However, within the Crerar Review Report (SG, 2007) the inherent tensions between devolved governance and accountability are reflected, between the recommendations for the need for scrutiny bodies to be independent, whilst focusing on strategic priorities agreed by Ministers and Parliament.

Despite challenges to its authority, HMIE was able to establish and maintain its position since the fragmented policy community remained post-devolution, making it difficult for ‘any one group to penetrate all sectors of the system’ (Humes, 2003: 83). In 2011, with the coming together of HMIE, LTS, the National CPD Team and the SG’s Positive Behaviour Team under the new organisation, Education Scotland, and the temporary then permanent appointment of their previous Senior Chief Inspector as Chief Executive of Education Scotland, HMIE seem set to further dominate policy and its discourse. Given the ‘policy community’ and possible ‘leadership class’ (Johnston and MacKenzie, 2003: 97) at work within Scottish education, it seems unlikely that much will really change (Humes and Bryce, 2003b) perhaps, since Bell (2007: 9) asserts:

\[
policy\ \text{is derived from the values that inform the dominant discourses in the socio-political environment}
\]

**2.5 Educational Policy Development**

Despite its distinctiveness, Scotland has been very much affected by globalization, facing similar challenges, shaping similar solutions, creating a ‘globalization effect’
on education policy (Dale, 1999: 5). Both policy borrowing and policy learning have been evident. Whilst it would be difficult to identify the contribution of specific mechanisms or effects on contemporary distributed leadership policy, its spread through the literature of the Western World suggests a general trend. In Scotland, the dearth of empirical evidence for distributed leadership has led to ‘lesson drawing’ and ‘policy transfer’ (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996: 344; 349), rejecting hierarchical leadership and management approaches previously adopted. Processes such as copying, emulation, hybridization, synthesis and inspiration (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996; Rose, 1991) are reflected in government sponsored ‘thought leader’ initiatives and North American/Canadian leadership study visits. Networks of influence (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006) and learning communities (Hargreaves, 2008) developed to transfer approaches from other countries. Those initiatives contributed to an evidence-based practice (EBP) strategy viewed by ‘policy players’ and ‘service delivery managers’ as providing a more effective mechanism than disseminating research information (Nutley et al., 2003: 126). EBP provided a way of circumventing established policy players, introducing new ways of overcoming obstacles to policy implementation.

Policy transfer to Scotland was not without barriers, constrained by political, institutional and structural restraints (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996), resulting in continuity of educational leadership policy after the SNP election of 2007. Furthermore, whilst policy transfer potentially increased the number of actors involved within comparative international communities, it reinforced the existing system, circulating similar ideas amongst compatible nations, maintaining the status quo (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996). Networks may have spread innovation, stimulated learning, increased professional motivation and reduced inequalities but they often became self-interested and even delusional, having limited scale (Hargreaves, 2008).

As will be seen through subsequent chapters, key names contributing to the literature around distributed leadership, were endorsed by UK and Scottish governments. Others, with more dissenting voices, did not enjoy such patronage. In the main, endorsed authors are located in England (e.g. Alma Harris; Peter Gronn, Australian, previously based in Scotland), Canada (e.g. Kenneth Leithwood; Michael Fullan) and North America (e.g. Richard Elmore; James Spillane; Andy
Hargreaves, previously based in England then Canada). Since 2006, Elmore, Fullan, Harris, and Spillane have been individually invited to speak at national platforms by the SG in conjunction with CPD Scotland (funded directly by SG; part of LTS, now Education Scotland).

The fact that policy makers have drawn policy direction from those parts of the globe is not surprising. ‘Convergence’, ‘diffusion’ and the active process of meaning-making or ‘learning’ in public policy is both context/problem specific and collaborative through interdependent networks or communities of practice informing contemporary ideas of governance (Freeman, 2006: 367). Through convergence, policy makers have tried to make sense of the world in relation to what is already familiar, selecting from countries seen as having similar contexts to Scotland.

Moves to promote distributed forms of leadership would be unlikely to gain approval from key policy players, unless located in democratic principles in full accordance with the teaching profession. No one likes to be ‘telt’ in Scottish education. We are adverse to top-down change, in part due to lack of consensus as to which body has the legitimate right to institute change. The emphasis on distributive leadership in recent HMIE parlance appears to arise from Elmore’s work (e-Lead, 2008) but may in fact be rooted in concepts of distributive justice, based on the work of the philosopher John Rawls (Maiese, 2003) which included the principle of equality of opportunity (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2007). Distributive justice and subsequently, distributive leadership could be perceived as being in keeping with the democratic principles of Scotland and as such, competent (Wenger, 2000) by both government and the professional community.

2.6 The Influence of Research on Educational Policy Development

Emerging global ‘travelling policy’ themes and processes enable policy-makers to quickly invoke structural and system changes in embedded policy (Ozga and Jones, 2006). Globally, policy makers have come to view the purpose of educational research as solutions focused, leading to the identification of what works rather than promoting blue-skies thinking (Ozga and Jones, 2006). The knowledge economy within the global marketplace is more concerned with tradable commodities than what is in the public good (Kenway et al., 2004).
In the 1960s, following a rapid expansion of public funding, government controlled research became integrated with administration and policy (Nisbet, 2000), creating one of the largest and most complex research areas within the social sciences (Lawn and Furlong, 2007). The expansion of Higher Education, along with the incorporation of initial teacher education, saw an increase in publications directed at a more ‘professional’ than ‘academic’ readership within an international community. Global interests and audiences helped determine research undertaken and reported, exerting pressure to ensure research became more applied and relevant to practitioners and policy makers, with little ‘blue skies’ (Lawn and Furlong, 2007: 64) or ‘fundamental’ (Humes, 2007: 84) research conducted.

Whilst influenced by national and international factors, developments differed in Scotland. By the 1930s, education research was well-established, very much involving the professional community (Lawn, 2004). Throughout the 1960s, SED policy makers and university researchers were relatively well aligned, strongly influenced by HMI to focus on research on policy implementation rather than formation (Byrne and Ozga, 2006). Growing disillusionment with progress, procedures and lack of dissemination of findings impacting on practice, led to centrally driven curriculum reform. In 1965, the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum was established to bring together HMI, SED, colleges of education and teachers (Nisbet, 2000). During the 1980s, education research moved away from a focus on education’s role in challenging inequality towards a practice-based enquiry into curriculum, education administration and management, school effectiveness and the evaluation of specific policies (Byrne and Ozga, 2006). Scottish research, had a pragmatic focus linked to policy priorities (Humes, 2007) leading to tensions, contradictions and barriers to knowledge transfer (Lawn, 2008).

The Scottish Executive, recognising the significance and importance of knowledge transfer for strategic thinking in a post-devolution Scotland, provided considerable funding to facilitate that process (Ozga and Jones, 2006). Disappointing Scottish ratings in the 2001 UK Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) led to attempts by a range of bodies to ‘address the weaknesses at various levels – strategic, structural, institutional, cultural, methodological, theoretical’ (Humes, 2007: 73). In 2004, the Applied Educational Research Scheme (AERS) was jointly funded for a three-year period by the Scottish Funding Council (previously SHEFC) and SEED (now
SGED). AERS was established to: improve the infrastructure for education research through collaboration; enhance Scotland’s longer-term educational needs; conduct research projects (focused on learners, learning and teaching; school management and governance; schools and social capital) related to the Scottish National Priorities. AERS was also part of a government agenda to develop mechanisms for translating research into practice, bringing together teacher and researcher communities of practice.

The SG has its own formidable Social Research Group with researchers working alongside economists and statisticians in the Analytical Service Divisions (ASDs), aligned with the main policy groups, charged with: interpreting evidence and research based advice; undertaking research and reviews; commissioning external research; disseminating research findings and promoting their utilisation; engaging with the academic and wider research community in order to bring expert knowledge into the policy making process. However, a number of contradictions run through that agenda (Ozga and Jones, 2006): knowledge transfer requires a perception that knowledge can be moved (a rationalist/scientific perspective); transplant links to how organisations are structured and function (an institutionalised/bounded rationality perspective); translation is relational, involving social interaction (social constructionist/agreed knowledge perspective). Policy-makers seek unambiguous recommendations; practitioners seek relevant ideas for quick implementation; researchers seek out and explore ambiguity (Humes, 2007).

Since 1997, New Labour placed an emphasis on EBP resulting in diversification of research roles, less project management, a greater number of reviews, greater emphasis on knowledge transfer with associated use of ‘experts’ and government researchers acting as knowledge brokers, as well as an increased emphasis on communication and impact (Diana Wilkinson, previously Chief Researcher of the SG: personal conversation, September 12, 2008). One of the significant drivers for research informed policy, was its role in informing how government money should be spent. Rapid Evidence Assessments (REAs) were utilized as a pragmatic approach to provide quick summaries of what was already known about a policy or practice, through a systematic search and appraisal of literature and other sources. REAs could lack comprehensiveness and rigour. In relation to distributed
leadership, as discussed in subsequent chapters, the lack of empirical research would make an REA policy heavy and practice light.

Despite effort and funding, there still exists a dislocation between policy, research and practice in Scotland. An ‘anti-intellectual’ climate (Humes, 2003: 84) coupled with researchers generally not being good at communicating findings, means that where there are deeply held beliefs, ideology will prevail over evidence. Such ideology may be guided by professional or tacit knowledge from the relatively small number of ‘heard voices’ within the established policy network. EBP is most likely to succeed in its ultimate goal of effecting changes in behaviour when the findings do not upset the status quo (Nutley et al., 2003). Within that context, the SG Social Research Group is indeed formidable and must wield considerable influence within the SG but its social researchers do not enjoy the same degree of autonomy as other social scientists (Wilkinson, 12.9.08).

The current policy direction pertaining to distributed leadership in Scotland’s schools is not based on EBP from Scottish research. It is based on policy from other countries perceived as similar to Scotland, without recognition of key differences in social context or workforce reform. Policy cannot simply be transferred across the globe through ‘dissemination’ or ‘standardisation’ (Dale, 1999: 5).

2.7 Workforce Reform

Distributed leadership was advanced by key players in the policy network intent on: promoting collegiality for workforce reform; addressing the perceived headteacher recruitment and retention crisis; addressing the school improvement agenda. Since 1997, New Labour governments increased their interest in and commitment to ‘evidence-based’ or ‘evidence-informed’ policy, seeking guidance from research in order to shape their modernisation policy. Funding was targeted to encourage research in specific areas perceived as policy-relevant, particularly in relation to the raising standards agenda (Byrne and Ozga, 2006). From the 1980s, school effectiveness research was fatally flawed, seeking to identify what the key ingredients for success were in exceptional disadvantaged schools, harnessed to secure improvement across schools (Byrne and Ozga, 2006). With school governance devolved to local level, the state was no longer accountable for social inequality, and education could become the new whipping boy. Responsibility and
risk moved from government to school, headteachers in particular became accountable (Bell, 2007).

Over the last two decades, the move away from emphasising administration and policy towards emphasising management, reflected a restructuring of state education systems in many Western countries (Peters, 2003: 1034). The shift towards devolved management brought with it an emphasis on strategic and development planning, accountability and reporting with, ‘an associated tendency to emphasise the concept of educational leadership’. An expectation developed that teachers would become involved in policy implementation, through new managerialist approaches (Peters, 2003). Embedded within the policy discourse are clues to the drive behind distributed leadership both in terms of what is said and in terms of what is omitted (Johnston and MacKenzie, 2003).

Although the Scottish policy context differs to that in the rest of the UK, similar tensions are evident in relation to the devolved responsibility to schools for taking forward a centrally determined school improvement agenda. Instead of mustering a radical, first principles, detailed and lengthy examination of workforce reform, the SG identified and promoted a loosely defined term carrying with it great expectations for addressing national and local challenges. Distributed leadership became yet another ‘slogan or banality’, a universally accepted truth not requiring explanation or justification (Ozga and Jones, 2006: 6), providing legitimization for workforce reform, presenting policy in a pill palatable for the profession to swallow, inciting little confrontation.

The outcomes of the McConé Committee of Inquiry, TP21 (SEED, 2001) significantly affected teachers’ conditions of service and remuneration, providing a defining moment for policy discourse, promoting collegiality. Flatter management structures were signalled, moving to reduced hierarchy and increased participative management (MacDonald, 2004). McCrone’s recommendations included the restructuring of leadership positions to develop a ‘senior management team’ comparable to the remit of Scotland’s companies (Donn, 2003: 124). Another corporate world feature was the process of job-sizing, determining salary on ‘size of responsibility’ according to: responsibilities for leadership, good management and the strategic direction of colleagues; curriculum development and quality assurance;
whole school policy implementation; and working with partners (Humes and Bryce, 2003b: 1049). As a consequence, there were important implications for teacher career structures and for aspirant headteachers.

There were now greater opportunities – in theory at least – for collegiality. It was in the interest of headteachers to open up their leadership style as, with fewer promoted posts, the implications for a potential significant increase in workload was clear. A correlating element of distrust was introduced where the invitation to take on leadership roles was viewed by many teachers as a new managerialist strategy, shifting responsibility and associated workload. Leadership, or more specifically distributed leadership emerged, positioned as distinct from and morally superior to management. Skilled negotiation was required by headteachers charged with aligning multiple, often conflicting and public accountabilities. Collegiality and distributed leadership provided a discourse aligned to social justice, within which teachers had a right to share school leadership with formal leaders. However, that policy discourse signalled that neither government nor unions had grasped the complicated nature of workforce reform (Humes and Bryce, 2003b).

Distributed leadership provided the means to engage all teachers in school leadership and improvement, sharing the responsibility previously resting on the headteacher’s shoulders. It provided the means for heads to better identify and grow their own leaders. In so doing, teachers might gain the skills, experience, competence and confidence to go forward into headship, addressing a perceived recruitment and retention crisis, addressing workforce reform issues without tackling the range of issues (MacBeath et al., 2009) at the root of that crisis.

2.8 The Rise of Distributed Leadership within Scottish Education Policy
As explored at depth in subsequent chapters, across the international literature there has been a move away from the previous emphasis placed on the heroic, charismatic individual leader (Fullan, 2005; Gronn, 2002; Southworth, 2004) towards a more distributed perspective (Storey, 2004) which nurtures and sustains school improvement (Day et al., 2007a; Harris, 2004a; Harris & Spillane, 2008; Timperley, 2005), seeking to address issues of succession planning (Hargreaves, 2008). In addition, recognition has been given to the changing role of the headteacher creating issues related to authority and control (Slater, 2008) as well as pressures involved in
relation to multiple, and often conflicting, expectations and accountabilities (Pascal and Ribbins, 1998) making it difficult for headteachers to ‘let go’ of control (Harris, 2004a; MacBeath, 2005). Regardless, the contemporary view recognises that, ‘in a complex, fast-paced world, leadership cannot rest on the shoulders of the few’ (Hargreaves, 2005: 180).

Distributed leadership has been positioned within Scottish education policy. Rather than tracing the rise of distributed leadership through every contemporary Scottish education policy paper, within the scope of this thesis, the focus is on those having had particular influence in that regard. Torrance (2009) explores a brief review of contemporary Scottish policy documents concluding that the terminology used has changed significantly since 2000. Many of those policies were devised, promoted and evaluated by HMIE which had moved into and filled the policy vacuum.

Improving Leadership in Scottish Schools (HMIE, 2000) is devoid of terms such as distributed leadership or collegiality, using instead the term delegation throughout. In comparison, Ambitious, Excellent Schools: Our Agenda for Action (SEED, 2004), exhorted ‘high expectations, high quality leadership and confident, ambitious schools’, promoting leadership as critical to successful schools, rather than the headteacher as sole leader. Improving Scottish Education (HMIE, 2006a) whilst making no mention of the term delegation, uses instead distributed leadership once and shared leadership six times. How Good Is Our School? The Journey to Excellence (HMIE, 2006b) refers to distributed leadership once and collegiality seven times. How Good Is Our School? 3 (HMIE, 2007a) avoids use of the term distributed leadership, referring instead to delegation once and to collegiality six times. Leadership for Learning: The Challenges of Leading in a Time of Change (HMIE, 2007b) refers to distributive leadership eighteen times, shared leadership five times, collegiality three times and delegation three times.

As discussed in subsequent chapters, the political positioning of a distributed perspective on leadership is normative and aspirational, rather than rooted in empirical research. The substitution and interchangeability of labels for that distributed perspective reflects a lack of clarity as well as the search for professionally acceptable terminology to enable policy to become embedded with least resistance. There is also an assumption within the policy discourse that a
distributed perspective is either established or should become established in school practice. There is no attempt to problematise distributed leadership and as such, no guidance as to the complexities of situating policy in practice. Torrance (2009) called for a much more in-depth analysis of contemporary policy documents within an exploration of the context they sit, including the impact of TP21 (SEED, 2001) on contemporary rhetoric. Such level of detail falls outwith the scope of this study.

2.9 The Political Endorsement of Headship Preparation

Understandings of the role of the headteacher in enhancing school effectiveness have significantly developed over the past twenty years. A perceived global headteacher recruitment and retention crisis (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2008) in particular relation to inner cities and rural communities (MacBeath et al., 2009) and a focus on succession planning (Hanbury, 2009) focused discussion further as to what constitutes effective preparation for headship. Such discussion was set against the background of the changing role of the headteacher, within a shift towards the devolved governance of schools. Leadership development and more specifically, headteacher development, became the preoccupation of those charged with strategically targeting school improvement efforts constituting, ‘a major national policy priority of governments’ (Davidson et al., 2008: 68). Since 1990, leadership rather than management development has been increasingly emphasised. Distributed leadership has been widely endorsed with an increased focus on developing organisational leadership capacity building, concurrently with the development of individual’s leadership confidence and competence (Torrance, 2011 and in press).

Until very recently, efforts continued to focus mainly on headship preparation, the headteacher role considered key and ultimately accountable. In Scotland, as discussed in chapter one, the SQH was introduced in 1998 as a politically endorsed headship preparation programme. The involvement of universities in Scotland ensured that although the SQH programme is set within contemporary ‘good practice’, programme participants are encouraged to be critical and to challenge orthodoxy, ‘to look outward to hard social and political issues and to interrogate their own position and perspectives’ (Cowie, 2008: 34; Cowie and Crawford, 2007). In so doing, it is intended that participants do not simply conform to a centrally endorsed regime (Gronn, 2002).
The SQH provides a medium within which aspirants can develop an image of themselves as headteachers. Moreover, it empowers participants through its authority and a growing confidence with use of professional language endorsed by the SG (Reeves and Forde, 2004). It offers a powerful model of professional learning, combining theoretical and practical approaches through workplace learning (Reeves et al., 2002). For example, Cowie et al. (2007: 10) found that new headteachers who had undertaken the SQH programme highlighted,

*how reading and reflection on reading confirmed inherent preferences for collegial approaches, encouraged them to behave in a collegial manner, and sometimes challenged the ways in which they managed.*

Teacher CPD in Scotland has been heavily influenced since 2000 by TP21 (SEED, 2001), endorsing initiatives already begun as part of the CPD Framework discussions and development of a ‘standards’ based approach. The SQH was designed in accordance with the SfH (SEED, 1998 revised 2005), one of four national standards for: Initial Teacher Education; Full Registration; Chartered Teacher; Headship. Professional standards could be aligned to workforce reform, designed to up-skill the teaching profession.

The SfH, structured under five professional actions and three essential elements interrelated by design, sets out the level and range of competences required of effective headteachers entrusted with the leadership and management of Scotland’s schools (see O’Brien and Torrance, 2005). The SfH provides a template against which those aspiring to headship are assessed, in order to determine their strengths and areas for professional development (SEED, 2005). SQH participants find working with the SfH encourages them to act in certain ways in relation to developing a vision (Senge, 2006) of what they aspire to achieve, justify certain actions as well as changing the way they think about school leadership, moving away from a task focused approach to one committed to working with and through people and on underlying purposes, leading to evidence of competence (Reeves et al., 2001). Conversely, a minority of participants, often those with more experience, are driven by the need simply to jump through hoops without learning much as a result (Reeves et al., 2001).

Although the SfH is arguably less ‘technicist’ than English standards (Cowie and
Crawford, 2007; O’Brien and Torrance, 2005) and based on a broader view of education and the professional role of teachers and school leaders, there is a danger of standards being used to ensure leaders conform to a centrally endorsed regime (Gronn, 2002). The positioning of normative perspectives within the SfH, effectively established an endorsed structure within which the universities were charged with up-skilling aspirants, enabling them to take on the role of contemporary headteachers (Torrance, in press). Although Cowie (2008: 24) concedes that the original SfH ‘avoided a narrow reductionist approach by developing a holistic model underpinned by the “Why, What and How” of professional practice’, he argues that the introduction of a standard for new headteachers in Scotland in itself, ‘mirrors the politically driven “competence movement” that emerged in teacher education in the 1990s and has had a major influence on head teacher preparation in Scotland’. The revised SfH is not underpinned by the same holistic model, in large part due to the Universities not being invited to contribute to its redesign.

Additionally, there are inherent contradictions across the SfH in terms of its promotion of distributed forms of leadership alongside undertones of ‘new managerialism’ (Peters, 2003: 1034). There are competing ideologies and two opposing narratives with little reference to collegiality and participative management, whilst emphasising ‘motivating staff and ensuring their compliance in pursuit of priorities set externally’ (Cowie, 2008: 34). Drawing on the work of Gronn (2003a), Cowie (2008: 34) contends that such conflicting discourse is even more apparent in the revised (2005) than the original (1998), in that it ‘reflects the ambiguous mix of bureaucratic central control that standards represent (Gronn, 2003) and the rhetoric of increased professional autonomy’. Such conflict in discourse reflects Bush’s (2008a: 2) view that, ‘governments would like schools to have visionary leadership as long as the visions do not depart in any significant way from government imperatives’.

The widespread endorsement of distributed leadership along with the coexisting emphasis on the key role of the headteacher results in a duality within the discourse and tension between competing ideologies and underpinning values and principles. One thread focuses on development, improving practice, self-reflection, learning and improving capability. The other is more to do with managerialism, accountability
and policy implementation.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter examined the global, UK and Scottish policy contexts within which distributed leadership has been positioned. The emergence and promotion of a distributed perspective was identified as a response to globalization and devolved school governance. It was argued that the absence of Scottish research in this area, led to education policy developing through processes of policy borrowing and policy learning from countries deemed similar in outlook. The influence of research on educational policy development was discussed before premising that the absence of Scottish and indeed international research into distributed leadership was circumvented through light touch strategies. As such, policy lacked robust underpinning leading to HMIE having a significant influence on policy direction without a secure evidence base. Workforce reform was highlighted as a key driver, helping to explain the political endorsement and rise of distributed leadership within Scottish education. It was also argued that distributed leadership became established in leadership preparation programmes, indoctrinating aspirant headteachers, through the SfH and SQH.

Policy making in Scotland is a pluralist process with a variety of organised interest groups active in influencing and shaping policy through formal and informal mechanisms. Devolution brings with it greater autonomy from central UK government as well as greater accountability to central Scottish Government. Distributed leadership provides a mechanism for ensuring compliance without challenge to democratic principles. Compliance is required to instil electoral confidence through demonstration of action rather than longer-term reflection and strategic policy formation. However, the standing and distinctiveness of social democracy face challenges, as does its preoccupation with organised labour (Gamble and Wright, 1999).

In Scotland, a range of networks exist independently from government, each with its own agenda and rules of engagement, each trying to bring its own influence to bear on government policy, each contributing to social capital or ‘social glue’ (Catts and Ozga, 2005: 1; Putnam, 2000). There is, however, lack of transparency in relation to who the key voices are behind the scenes of education policy making in Scotland –
who are the ‘insiders’ and who are the ‘outsiders’. In the immediate sense, this raises concerns about which interest group’s agenda has most prominence. In the longer term, ‘the clandestine circulation of capital in the form of cultural capital become[s] determinant in the reproduction of the social structure’ (Bourdieu, 2006: 114).

Distributed leadership has been heralded an elixir or ‘cure all’ for the challenges besetting Scottish education such as devolved governance, the perceived leadership crisis, the inherent difficulties in school management structures, workload pressures and issues of succession planning. As will be argued, its theoretical construction has been artificial. To large extent, distributed leadership has served a political rather than educational purpose.

Such understanding foregrounds the literature review chapters. First, the genealogy of the field of educational leadership is traced, before examining the construction behind and positioning of school leadership, distributed leadership and teacher leadership. It will be argued that the political positioning of distributed leadership has been necessary since its theoretical underpinning is so problematic. The rhetoric of distributed leadership found across contemporary education policy and literature, forms popular discourse. Having become commonly accepted, it is seldom questioned. Nor is the interchangeability of terms such as collegiality, distributed, distributive and shared leadership. Conceptual understanding of each is lacking. The endorsement of distributed leadership has been normative and aspirational, not premised on empirical understandings. It has unsteady foundations leading to tensions in the field. Regardless, headteachers have been charged with taking forward a distributed perspective. Those who have attempted to do so have tried to make sense of what that means within school practice. The three case study chapters and subsequent analysis of the findings serve to illuminate policy and theory in practice.
Chapter Three: Literature Review - Part 1
The Genealogy of the Field of Educational Leadership

3.1 Introduction
The field of educational leadership remains contested. Without an understanding of
the underpinning field of educational leadership, it would be difficult to justify the
basis to any theoretical or empirical discussion. Through recognising educational
leadership as a field, we are provided with what Gunter (2004: 23) describes as, ‘a
metaphor to describe and understand intellectual work’. Gunter supports Bourdieu’s
(2000: 11) view that a field is ‘characterized by the pursuit of a specific goal, tending
to favour no less absolute investments by all (and only) those who possess the
required dispositions’. However, asserting educational leadership as a unique field
rather than a category within the field of public sector service leadership is a
contested assertion. Moreover, privileging leadership as distinct from management
is not without its critics and doing so can create specific tensions in practice,
explored in later chapters of the literature review, returned to in the analysis of the
research findings. The motivations behind the elevation of leadership to a field in its
own right are worthy of exploration throughout the thesis.

Gunter and Ribbins (2003; 277) make a case for the importance of continuing to
ask, ‘what is educational and educative about leadership in educational institutions?’
By doing so, they argue, ‘it enables us to challenge the politically motivated
importation of generic models’. Gunter (2005: 166) recognises that, ‘conceptualizing
research within the field is unsettled and unsettling’, arguing, ‘this is both necessary
and desirable’. That necessity could hold true for any field but particularly so, within
such a complex field as educational leadership (Gunter, 2004). Indeed, although
outwith the scope of this thesis to explore in depth, through a complex analysis
drawing extensively from the work of Bourdieu, Gunter (2012) calls for a rethinking
of the field of educational leadership.

In this introduction to the literature review sections, the genealogy of the field of
educational leadership is first traced. Two broad issues are worthy of further
discussion: whether educational leadership could be described as a separate field
from leadership in general; whether educational leadership could be described as a
separate field from educational management. In conclusion, the implications of such issues on the emergence of distributed leadership are discussed.

3.2 Tracing The Roots Of The Field Of Educational Leadership
Gronn (2003b) traces the development of the field of educational leadership back to the early 1980s, highlighting the work of Alan Fraser Davies and Graham Little at the University of Melbourne as having significant influence on his own developing understandings. Davies and Little, two of a growing number of scholars, developed connections between the fields of psychology, political science and sociology. Gronn (2003b: 268) identifies Davies’ stewardship of the ‘Melbourne psycho-social group’ as making a significant contribution to developing understandings across the fields. At the same point in time, Gronn (2003b: 268) became aware of ‘an extensive heritage of research literature on leadership, the bulk of the findings of which was dominated by behavioural psychology’. By the 1990s, Gronn (2003b: 269) was becoming concerned that, ‘a significant amount of the field’s understanding of leadership is grounded in highly dubious and problematic assumptions’, identifying six key aspects of concern some of which will be explored later. Having discussed the question Leadership: who needs it?, Gronn (2003b: 285; 287) argues that in order for its retention to be justified, educational leadership as a field needs to adopt ‘a much more measured and parsimonious approach’ with scaled down claims and better descriptions of the division of labour and related processes such as the interdependence between agents in an organisation, concluding:

provided leadership can rework some of its discursive rigidities, so as to more adequately account for and represent these components of the division of labour, it may retain its conceptual utility.

Gunter and Ribbins (2003: 256) also recognise that educational leadership has drawn from various disciplines including philosophy and history, but contend that the social sciences and in particular, sociology, have had the dominant influence. They identify that both education policy sociology (‘an academic habitus where the emphasis is on understanding practice as a site of contested power relations through which the state delivers its goals’) and educational management with its contrasting perspectives since the 1950s in the UK (with a practitioner-academic habitus, Gunter, 2002) and USA (with an emphasis on educational administration with a drive to be based on a science of organisation, perceiving itself as orientated on scientific theory), derive their intellectual heritage from the social sciences.
Gunter (2004) maps the change in labels used from educational administration from 1944 to 1974, to educational management from 1974 to 1988, to performance leadership since 1988. Gunter (2004) attributes the drive behind the change from administration to management to the need to deliver a curriculum fit for purpose within a dysfunctional economy, through accountability and responsibility, adopting terminology and strategies from private sector management. With increased emphasis placed on innovation and change, leadership has gained prominence in the field of management and business, more recently moving away from conceptions of leaders to conceptions of leadership (Senge, 2006). This theme is returned to in later sections of the literature review when that reviewed is broadened to include greater reference to literature within wider public service organisations, and to management and business.

### 3.3 Identifying the Distinctiveness of the Field of Educational Leadership

Educationalists tend to be fiercely protective of the uniqueness of their field. However, Gunter (2005: 166) recognises that, since the field of educational leadership ‘is located within wider social, economic and political arrangements, where there is an embedded cultural acceptance of the normality of leaders buttressed by hierarchical remuneration packages’ that, ‘there is much that the field takes for granted or might be reluctant to question’. It could be argued that leadership for education has many shared features with a range of other public sector services. For example, Hartley and Allison (2000) discuss a range of challenges related to modernization and improvement facing public services in general, arguing for the recognition of leadership processes (by those within and without formal management positions) and associated influence within and beyond the organisation (as distinct from management approaches by those in formal positions of power and authority).

Furthermore, Jackson and Stainsby (2000: 11; 12) argue that since the beginning of the 1980s, the traditional boundary between public and private sectors has ‘shifted dramatically’, causing ‘blurring of the boundaries between the market and the state’ and creating the need for the development of networks across the two sectors which, ‘pursue joint goals in either predictable or ambiguous environments’. Such networks enable the distribution of information and knowledge (as the ‘sources of power’), ‘increas[ing] the probability of successfully solving problems’, some being
‘wicked problems’ as outcomes of market failure, requiring the co-ordination across agencies and departments (Jackson and Stainsby, 2000: 14; 12). The traditional boundaries between, and hierarchies within public and private sectors, were perceived as inadequate to cope with complex, unpredictable and ambiguous circumstances requiring the joining up of localised knowledge sites in the pursuit of improvement, through mutual interest networks based on shared values and joint goals, requiring the distribution of power within the network (‘constellations of centres of power’), leadership across the network, and network managers with the role of ‘sense makers’ (Jackson and Stainsby, 2000: 14). That said, in the main within Scottish schools, activity and action takes place under public sector governance, ‘where decisions are made within democratic institutions underpinned by collective values’ (Gunter, 2004: 24).

Such blurring of distinctions both within and between sectors challenges the distinctiveness of educational leadership as a field in its own right. However, there is a distinction between organisational leadership with its roots in business management, and educational leadership as a field in its own right (Gunter and Ribbins, 2003; Gunter, 2005: 174). The use of ‘educational’ in the field’s name, ‘focuses attention on the nature and purposes of field member work’:

Hence administration, management and leadership are about activity and require action, but are hollow unless developed within an educational institution; underpinned by educational values and goals; integrated within teaching and learning; and so practice is itself educational.

The focus on education, concerned with aspects such as curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, makes educational leadership unique. As Bush (2008b: 275 & 285) asserts:

While educational leaders may be able to benefit from a cross-sector discussion of the generic tasks of managing staff, finance and marketing (Bush, 1998), the leadership of learning is specific to schools. … The best way to ensure the efficacy of leadership is to ensure that it is focused on classroom learning...

3.4 Identifying Educational Leadership As A Separate Field From Educational Management

Bush (2008b: 271) identifies that prior to the Education Reform Act (in England) in 1988, ‘educational management was still a relatively new field of study and practice in the UK’ with few universities focusing on this area. Of those courses available, concepts and practice from private sector management were heavily drawn from,
through literature from the USA in particular, ‘where the field had been established for several decades’. Bell (2007, 5) identifies that the growth of specialist educational management courses since the late 1960s created the perceived need for the development of a separate discipline, ‘with its own concepts, theories and related practice’. Bell (2007) goes on to identify the pioneering work of the Open University in its educational management distance learning programmes, the first unit of its E321 programme explored the appropriateness of applying management theory and practice to educational contexts. Bush (2008b: 272) also refers to the groundbreaking work of the Open University, which in its E323 focus on ‘Management and the School’, ‘included a discussion of leadership but this was a specific, and subordinate, theme within the wider treatment of educational management’.

Bush (2008b: 275) contends that the initial development of theory was mainly concerned with the application of industrial models to educational settings but that as educational management became established as an academic field in its own right, ‘its theorists and practitioners began to develop alternative models based on their observation of, and experience in, schools and colleges’. Bush (2008b: 275) asserts that over the past twenty years, the field of educational leadership and management has become an established discipline in its own right, ‘with its own theories and significant empirical data testing their validity in education (Bush, 2003: 13)’.

Efforts to develop the academic discipline of educational management coincided with an increased emphasis on school management strategies, linked to the policy direction increasing efficiency and effectiveness in terms of teaching and learning. Gunter (2004) attributes the drive behind the change from management to leadership to the development of site-based performance management similar to what was happening in other areas of the public sector but different, in relation to positioning the headteacher as the leader responsible for resourcing and delivering a centralised curriculum (in England) through inspiring (and contractually enforcing) the school workforce and community to that end. The rhetoric of school reform cast headteachers ‘as new kinds of hybrid actors … given the role and the powers to bring about this “reculturing” of school organisation’, concerned with changing hearts and minds, beyond a management perspective (Ball, 2008: 138). Educational
leadership was politically positioned to provide the mitigated language of policy and practice to invoke workforce reform. Leadership became associated with transformational change (Ball, 2008). Management was downgraded as functional. Furthermore, Gunter (2004; 2012: 2) argues that the positioning of leadership within the headteacher post resulted in delegated management cloaked as distributed leadership or ‘hybridised delegation’, designed to implement ‘a totalising reform strategy where all could be responsible and accountable for standards’, supported by government endorsed national training. This, Gunter (2004: 32) argues, amounts to performance leadership, as distinct from educational leadership, the latter being a social practice which

focuses on the education system, is about education, is integral to learning processes and outcomes, and is of itself educative. It is underpinned by a richness of research and theory located in the social sciences, and based on valuing dialogue and differences of views.

Gunter and Ribbins (2003: 255) trace educational leadership emerging from the late 1980s from educational management with ‘those labelling their work as policy sociology, educational management, school effectiveness, and school improvement’ locating their interests within the field of educational leadership. Little wonder perhaps, that such competing voices resulted in conceptual confusion. Through a considered review of its growth, Gunter and Ribbins (2003: 269; 260) identify the field as a, ‘multi-site and hence inclusive of a range of practitioners’ and range of knowledge producers occupying their own positions, bringing their own perspectives to bear, promoting their own provinces (‘claims to the truth regarding how power is conceptualised and engaged with’), influencing their practices and processes. They argue that perspectives on knowledge and knowing are both political and powerful constructs. Through a discussion of the influence exerted by different positions, Gunter and Ribbins (2003: 256-257) identify eight questions worthy of consideration:

- who produces knowledge regarding educational leadership?
- how is such knowledge produced?
- what forms can such knowledge take?
- where is knowledge produced?
- what types of knowing are regarded as constituting the truth regarding the human condition?
- what do we know about the practice of educational leadership when in the doing of it much goes unrecognised and unrecorded?
- how do we know about educational leadership?
how do we bring our own perspectives into the generation of knowledge about educational leadership?

Gunter (2005: 166) argues that as a field, educational leadership ‘does not have a claim to a single disciplinary truth based on a distinctive, rational and agreed methodology, but is located within the social sciences’. She (2005: 166) contends that the field of educational leadership is, ‘structurally privileged through the promotion of organizational leadership as the means of securing public sector reform, with heavy investment from the taxpayer (PMSU, 2004)’. Gunter (2005: 175) identifies the ‘redefining of management (and indeed teaching) as lower level activity that is technical and about getting the job done’. Leadership, conversely, was elevated through its positioning within the role of transformational leaders (as opposed to followers) perceived to have the skill set and attributes to inspire and influence followers to emotionally invest in the organisation. In this way, the shift in label from management to leadership, ‘signals changes in responsibility and accountability’ (Gunter, 2004: 24). Gronn (2003b: 269) also identifies that, ‘in the mid-1980s, as part of leadership exceptionalism, commentators began to canonise leadership and to demonise management’. This, in part, could explain why leadership has been privileged above other terms since, as Gronn (2003b: 281) analyses:

- leadership is behaviour associated by those perceived as more high profile managers and is therefore perceived as desirable;
- leadership is the preferred term (although more often than not linked with influence) from a discursive family of terms which includes authority, power, influence, persuasion, manipulation, coercion and force because of the negative associations generally made with the other terms;
- leadership is traditionally located within the agency of individuals who are referred to as leaders and positioned at the input end of a flow of action;
- leadership in its traditional location within the agency of individuals who are referred to as leaders, creates a leader-follower binary which privileges leaders above followers;
- leadership in its traditional location within the agency of individuals who are referred to as leaders, ‘remains the doctrine of “exceptionalism”’. As such, it is both confined to a limited number of roles within an organisation which
privileges the individuals occupying those roles, and places expectations on those individuals to enhance the productivity of the organisation.

- Leadership has become normalised through the standards framework and government endorsed educational leadership development programmes which Gronn (2003b: 284) refers to as ‘designer-leadership’. It has been elevated to its current position and located within organisational roles with clear expectations placed on role incumbents who in turn are given legitimisation.

Through a detailed analysis, Gronn (2004) presents the problems associated with each of the six positions paraphrased above, which are returned to in later sections of the literature review. Following this argument, leadership could be perceived as a desirable construct for those professed as leaders within the organisation, for the organisation which seeks improvement and for those seeking effective governance of the organisation, rather than being a robust field in itself. That view is supported by Gunter (2012) who, building on the work of Bourdieu perceives leadership as having been ‘codified’ to form the dominant ‘game’ with prescribed rules of engagement or ‘regularities’ adhered to by those with a ‘disposition’ or ‘habitus’ to conform, bringing about a ‘doxa’, leading to ‘institutionalised governance’ and ‘capital’. Those who comply benefit; those who dissent are disadvantaged.

The clear and deliberate distinction between leadership and management made by the largest teaching professional association of Scotland (EIS, 2008 revised 2010) delegated management to the function of formal roles, remits and associated workloads, enabling leadership to be recognised as incumbent in the role of every teacher. In so doing, all teachers are encouraged to engage in collegiality as promoted by the TP21 (SEED, 2001). In this way, beyond the functionality of the label, ‘leadership’ constitutes a political process (Gunter, 2004) enabling workforce reform through affecting agency and practice in schools. Although the intention may be to engage teachers as empowered professionals in improving pupil learning within schools, the reality may reflect Gunter’s (2004: 24) view that, ‘being labelled a leader is not so much about what you do as about creating a distinctive individualised status and identity that make it more efficient and effective to control what you do’. Arguably, it depends on whether it is performance leadership or educational leadership (Gunter, 2004: 38) which is the driving goal and resulting
practice, educational leadership enabling teachers to ‘position themselves as being in control of their knowing as primarily policy makers rather than just policy takers’. Hartley and Allison (2000: 38) identified similar tensions arising from the ‘existence of both influence-based leadership and authority, through formal structures and positions’ within each of their four case studies of local authorities.

If, as Bourdieu (2000: 11 in Gunter, 2004) suggests, a field is ‘characterized by the pursuit of a specific goal’, one has to question the goal or goals behind the field of educational leadership. If there are competing goals behind the development of the field, it could be anticipated that tensions will arise in school settings as a result. If one of the driving goals behind the development of the field has been workforce reform in pursuit of government objectives, it could be anticipated that contradictions will arise in school settings as a consequence.

3.5 Conclusion
What seems to be clear from a review of the literature is that educational leadership is a contested field, still trying to prove its heritage and utility, still developing, still finding its way. What is questionable, is whether the rejection of educational management as the solution to contemporary educational challenges and the emergence of distributed leadership in the pursuit of the antithesis of the charismatic hero headteacher in order to effectively take forward school improvement, is sufficient to merit educational leadership the status of a field: particularly, if the main purpose behind the existence of educational leadership is to serve school governance.

Regardless, both leadership and distributed leadership have become established in contemporary rhetoric and policy discourse, providing public policy solutions through creating a ‘powerful bandwagon effect’ in a ‘shared-power world [where] the advocates of policy change cannot force outcomes’, and where ‘there is no substitute for leadership’ to ‘influence the flow of action in such a way that problems, solutions, and politics are joined appropriately’ (Bryson and Crosby, 1992: 254; 345; 346; 347). Headteachers are charged with implementing such policy, judged on the leadership of their schools. They are required to make sense of their realities in that respect. This study set out to explore just how three primary headteachers make sense of their realities. In order to develop the research questions, inform the design
of the methods and locate subsequent findings, a detailed review of the literature was conducted. It is to those three chapters I now turn. First, to discuss the literature relating to school leadership. Second, to discuss the literature relating to distributed leadership. Third, to discuss the literature relating to teacher leadership.
4.1 Introduction

Following on from a review of the genealogy of educational leadership, this chapter explores the broader aspect of school leadership, informing an analysis of the literature relating to distributed leadership. In so doing, the concept of distributed leadership is better situated within the field of educational leadership and management. The chapter begins by identifying how the term ‘leadership’ has evolved and why it has gained such prominence in contemporary educational literature and policy. The development of the school leadership paradigm is traced first by focusing on the rise of leadership as a construct in its own right before exploring the literature around leadership as distinct from management. Throughout, the terms leadership, management and collegiality are problematised. Inherent difficulties arising from positioning leadership as distinct from management are explored. Issues with defining distributed leadership as a leadership approach and the inherent tensions in the leader-follower relationship are discussed. Finally, limitations in the leadership and management theory are highlighted. The chapter’s conclusion pulls together key points raised through a review of the literature on school leadership, identifying the implications for this PhD study.

In the next chapter, distributed leadership becomes the focus of discussion. The subsequent chapter, focuses on teacher leadership.

4.2 The Rise of Leadership

Bell (2007) traces the roots of ‘school leadership’ back to 1913 to a paper published in *The Supervision of City Schools* by the University of Chicago by Bobbitt (1913) who sought to apply the principles of management to the problems of systems in city schools. In Britain, Bell (2007) identifies some early indirect references to the management of schools, citing the Cross Commission (1888) coverage of school governors and managers, as well as the substantial correspondence concerned with Morant (1904) as the first Permanent Secretary of the Board of Education contained within *Regulations for Secondary Schools*. According to Bell (2007: 4),

*Apart from that, the silence on this topic is deafening. It is even impossible to find anything except the most transitory reference to school management and organisation in the 1944 Education Act.*
Grace (1995) traces the development of ‘school leadership’ through three distinct periods: from Victorian values, emphasising the hierarchical and moral dimension of school leadership, through to the 1940s; to its focus on social democracy from the 1940s to the 1970s; to its focus on accountability and the marketplace in the 1980s and 1990s. As far back as the mid 1950s, Gronn (2006: 3) attributes the increased interest in educational leadership to both public and scholarly efforts, linking effective leadership to ‘explanations of successful and high performing organisations’, developing a climate within which scholarship flourished leading to ‘a booming “leadership industry” which blossomed from the early 1980s’.

The field of educational management expanded significantly from the middle of the 1970s which Bell (2007) attributes to a period of growth in the emphasis placed on management strategies in a drive to secure efficiency and effectiveness of teaching and learning, citing the Great Debate on Education (1976) and the subsequent Green Paper which in turn heavily influenced educational policy in the late 1980s and 1990s. By 1977, the management and leadership role of the headteacher was identified as a significant factor in the overall success of a school. The centrality of the headteacher role was dominant in the literature discourse for the next 20 years (Bell, 2007). Bell (2007) associates the period from 1973 to 1987 as one of constrained resources, with a growing emphasis on school management in particular relation to teachers, along with heated debate about the nature and purpose of education, and decline in teacher morale resulting from various interventions. The role of the headteacher changed as additional managerial responsibilities were taken on: monitoring, evaluation and reporting on quality and standards. Then followed the additional financial management functions delegated to headteachers (and boards of governors in England). Headteachers were placed at the centre of the inspection process, deemed pivotal in the difference made between similar schools.

Tomlinson (2004) picks up the story from that point, identifying the 1990s as the period of performance management. The late 1990s saw a new policy for performance management which sought to address excessive bureaucracy, focusing more on planning for improved performance, collegiality and professional development of individuals and teams, requiring team leaders with leadership ability,
having both generic leadership and management as well as subject/duty specific skills and knowledge (Burton and Brundrett, 2005). Pre 1990, the term leadership is absent from the literature – management (generally used in the UK, Europe and Africa) and administration (generally used in the USA, Canada and Australia) being the preferred terms, the focus for study and discussion.

From the 1990s, the term leadership became the dominant paradigm (Burton and Brundrett, 2005). Management became viewed almost in derogatory terms in part due to its association with managerialism (MacBeath, 2004), ‘a stress on procedures at the expense of educational purpose and values’ (Bush, 1999: 240 and 2008a: 2), concerned more about efficiency than aims and purposes (Gunter, 1997). The globalised trend towards governance rather than government led to devolved responsibility for quality and effectiveness to local and school levels. The headteacher role changed, charged with taking forward national policy directives.

Since the 1990s, leadership and management have been identified as significant contributing factors of successful/effective schools particularly in the UK (Bush, 2008a; Davies, 2005; Gronn, 2006; Gunter 2001; HMIE, 2006a; Leithwood et al., 2006; MacBeath and Mortimore, 2001; Mulford, 2003; Nanus, 1992; Ofsted, 2003; Sammons et al., 1995) although as discussed later, that perspective is not devoid of its critics (Gronn, 2003b). Defining either success or effectiveness is hotly debated, with no consensus. Indeed there is an argument that school effectiveness research from the 1980s was fatally flawed (Byrne and Ozga, 2006). Regardless, leadership was located within one school leader, charged with taking forward a national agenda for change. Post 1990s ‘the notion of “leader” suddenly began to assume “super” or “exceptional” status (Gronn, 2004)’ (Gronn, 2006: 3). The charismatic head was considered alive and well.

The endorsement of the heroic, charismatic individual leader (Fullan, 2005; Gronn, 2002; Southworth, 2004) was, however, ineffectual in bringing about sustained change and lasting improvement. The search for other models of leadership began, leading to a more distributed perspective (Storey, 2004), nurturing and sustaining school improvement (Day et al., 2007a; Harris, 2004a; Harris & Spillane, 2008; Timperley, 2005), seeking to address issues of succession planning (Hargreaves, 2008). That growth in interest (Hargreaves, 2008: 33) corresponded to:
a massive retirement of the Boomer generation of leadership with few successors immediately behind it; a different generational mission in the younger cohort of potential leaders beneath that, which includes more women, is more assertive about its own needs, and is more concerned about work-life balance; and a reform environment that makes existing school leaders so overloaded and vulnerable that their Number 2s are reluctant to take on the job.

The rise of leadership was a response to devolved governance and workforce reform within the school improvement movement, rather than based on empirical evidence. However, possibly due to established school organisational structures remaining little changed over the years, leadership was equated with ‘status, authority and position’ (Harris and Muijs, 2003: 1) largely related to management roles. The distinction made between leadership and management is explored next.

4.3 Leadership As Distinct from Management and Inherent Difficulties with that Positioning

Within the main body of contemporary educational literature, leadership is generally discussed as distinct from management. Sapre (2002: 102) confines management to ‘a set of activities directed towards efficient and effective utilisation of organisational resources in order to achieve organisational goals’. Bolam (1999: 194) defines educational management as ‘an executive function for carrying out agreed policy’ and leadership having ‘at its core the responsibility for policy formulation and, where appropriate, organisational transformation’. Many authors (Cuban, 1988; Day et al., 2000; Davies, 2005; Dimmock, 1999; Hopkins, 2001) make clear distinctions between: leadership, concerned with strategic decisions, change and improvement; management, concerned with routine maintenance and systems; administration, concerned with lower order tasks and functions. Bennis and Nanus (1985: 21) contend, ‘Managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing’. Nanus (1992: 11) asserts, ‘The manager asks how and when the leader asks what and why’. Although catchy expressions, such quotes can be akin to meaningless sound bites.

Across the literature, Bush (2003a: 59 and 32; 2011: 34 and 36) identified six key models of educational management, each providing ‘partial descriptions’, basing his analysis on consideration of four distinguishing prerequisites:

1. The level of agreement about the ‘goals’ or objectives of the institution. …
2. The meaning and validity of organisational ‘structures’ within educational institutions. …
4. *The most appropriate ‘leadership strategies’ for educational institutions.*

In relation to those six models of educational management, Bush (2003a) identified nine models of educational leadership based on Bush and Glovers’ (2002) eight models, derived from the work of Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999) who identified six models from their literature review involving 121 leadership articles. Bush (2003a: 33-34 and 2008a: 10) aligned the nine leadership models alongside his six management models as shown in Table 4.1:

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<tr>
<th>Management Model</th>
<th>Leadership Model</th>
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<td>Formal</td>
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<td>Collegial</td>
<td>Participative</td>
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<td>Political</td>
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<td>Moral</td>
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<td>Instructional*</td>
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Table 4.1: The relationship between six management and nine leadership models (cited in Bush, 2004: 33-34 and 2008a: 10)

* ‘Instructional leadership does not link to any of the management models because it focuses on the direction of influence, learning and teaching, rather than the nature of the influence process.’

Bush (2011: 36) developed that model further, identifying distributed leadership, aligning it with collegial management (changing interpersonal to emotional leadership, alignment it to subjective management) as shown in Table 4.2:

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<th>Management Model</th>
<th>Leadership Model</th>
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<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
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<td>Instructional*</td>
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Table 4.2: The relationship between six management and ten leadership models (cited in Bush, 2011: 36)

Bush (2003a: 179, 178 and 179) advocates collectively, his six models of educational management ‘provide a comprehensive picture of the nature of
management in educational institutions’, recognising ‘no organisation can be explained by using only a single approach’, each approach being partial, having inherent strengths and weaknesses. In terms of the collegial models:

most heads aspire to collegiality, a claim which rarely survives rigorous scrutiny. The collegial framework all too often provides the setting for political activity or ‘top-down’ decision-making.

Moreover, Bush (2003a: 183, 185 and 192) recognises that each of his nine/ten leadership models is also partial, taken in isolation, providing ‘unidimensional perspectives on school leadership’ when in reality, ‘concepts of school leadership are complex and diverse’. Moreover, ‘in any one institution, certain models may be more prevalent than the others but it is a question of relative not absolute significance’. As such, effective headship is deemed to utilise the full range of leadership and management theories as a toolkit (‘conceptual pluralism’ – Bolman and Deal, 1984 and 1997: 11) from which the right tool is selected for a specific purpose and context (‘contingent leadership’ – Bush, 2003a and 2008a: 19), since outstanding leadership ‘is exquisitely sensitive to the context in which it is exercised’ (Leithwood et al., 1999: 4).

No single model of leadership is either right or wrong. In the three broad styles of leadership identified by Lewin et al. (1939), each was deemed to have inherent advantages and disadvantages. An ‘authoritarian’ style might be openly condemned, despite being efficient and productive when used selectively. ‘Democratic’ leadership is usually perceived in positive terms, despite decision-making processes taking longer and requiring considerable commitment. A ‘laissez-faire’ leadership style is usually perceived in negative terms as very little is generally achieved, although some people in some situations thrive on the freedom it affords. Effective leadership calls on a balance of attention to both tasks and people. To this end, effective leadership is generally considered to draw on a range of approaches.

In problematising educational leadership as a concept in its own right, other authors would contest the basic distinction made between leadership and management, arguing that while the separation of school leadership from management functions may be possible in theory, in practice it is much more difficult and even unhelpful to do so since they overlap (Bush, 2008a; Fidler, 1997). Indeed, within contemporary literature, a range of arguments exists relating to whether or not leadership can be
separated from management as a discrete function (Davies, 2005: 2; Gronn, 2003b; West-Burnham, 1997).

A further complication relates to much literature making some sort of distinction between strategic (Bush and Coleman, 2000; Mintzberg, 1995) and operational (Fawcett, 2000; West-Burnham, 1997) management (Middlewood and Lumby, 1998). Strategic management is not concerned with the day-to-day business or with keeping the show on the road, usually referred to as operational management (Middlewood, 1998). Strategic management is concerned with getting the direction and purpose right; the ‘big issues’, not the everyday; the broad sweep, not the finer detail. As such, strategic management appears closely related to leadership characteristics. However, MacGilchrist et al. (2004: 126) do not feel a distinction helpful, rather that ‘intelligent schools’ use a range of strategic and operational strategies, in combination.

Little consensus exists for precisely what leadership is, how/if it can be developed or how important it is (Connolly et al., 2000: 63). There is still little evidence of ‘the extent and nature of school leadership effects’ (Bush, 2008a: 7). That has not prevented a vast range of theories from developing, in relation to what constitutes effective leadership (Davies, 2005; Dunford et al., 2000; West-Burnham, 1997). Leithwood et al. (1999: 5) and Yukl (2002: 4-5) argue that definitions of leadership are ‘arbitrary and very subjective’.

Having conducted a comprehensive review of the literature, Rost (1991: 6) attributes one of the main hindrances to progress within the field to lack of attention to defining leadership with over 60% of authors ‘not defin[ing] leadership in their works’. Having identified twenty five definitions of leadership, MacBeath (2004) recognises significant ambiguity in the use and interpretation of the term. Of the over a hundred definitions of leadership available (Rost, 1991), the definitions vary widely but can be categorized under five broad perspectives, conceptualised as: a trait requiring inherent qualities (intelligence, confidence, charisma, determination, sociability, and integrity – Northouse, 2009: 20); an ability requiring a capacity; a skill requiring competency; a behaviour focused on tasks and relationship processes; or a relationship within which authority and influence are shared. In practice, leadership probably includes elements of each of those perspectives, ‘Each dimension explains
a facet of leadership’ (Northouse, 2009: 4). Gunter (2003) suggests that the language of education makes the challenges look simple and resolution easy. Leithwood (2003: 114) concludes from his six studies of teacher leadership:

the meaning of leadership remains murky, and its present status is highly dependent on a set of possibly fleeting, modern, Western values.

Harber and Davies (2003) highlight three specific issues in contemporary educational leadership: it refers mainly to conventional schools; is largely contextualised within northern industrialised countries; lacks acknowledgement of the ideology which lies behind it, based on the national goal of democracy (often contradicted by authoritarian leadership). Some would argue that the promotion of leadership as a concept is an aspect of new-managerialism (Gunter, 2004, 2008 and 2012: 4): ‘the means by which the reform agenda was configured and secured’.

Whereas others relate school leadership to broader educational and social purposes of schooling in relation to democracy, arguing strongly against headship as managerialism (Grace, 1995) and viewing the role of headteacher in relation to a focus on building democratic community as moral steward (Murphy, 2005a). I return to this discussion later.

Many would argue that rather than being mutually exclusive, leadership and management go hand in hand (Durrant, 2004). Schools are perceived to require both effective leadership and effective management (Burton and Brundrett, 2005; Bush, 2008a and 2008b; Cuban, 1988; Day et al., 2000; Hallinger, 2003b), although headteachers can experience tension in their efforts to combine both so that time and priority given to each is balanced, resulting in a mutually reinforcing affiliation (Day et al., 2000). Spillane (Spillane & Diamond, 2007: 5) in exploring a distributed perspective, recognises:

while the management versus leadership distinction is helpful as a theoretical tool, in practice it is often difficult to classify actions as purely managerial or purely leadership. The same activity can be designed to meet both maintenance and leadership goals.

As such, Spillane has attempted to reconcile this tension by moving towards a distributed perspective on leadership and management (personal conversation, July 2009). We turn next to issues inherent in defining a distributed perspective as a leadership approach.
4.4 Inherent Issues with Defining Distributed Leadership as a Leadership Approach

As will be seen in the next chapter of the literature review, within recent educational leadership literature, there is a strong focus on leadership rather than on a sole leader within a school. The National College of School Leadership (2004: 4.1 p3) advocates, ‘leadership is now understood as a function rather than as a role’. Leadership is viewed as distributed throughout the school as an organisation.

In situating distributed leadership as a leadership approach, however, a problem arises since collegiality is a management model, and distributed leadership is conceived as a leadership approach. Bush (2003a: 59) contends that the latter five management models evolved out of perceived limitations and weaknesses with conventional formal theories although formal approaches ‘remain valid as partial descriptions of organisation and management in education. … [and] still have much to contribute to our understanding of schools and colleges as organisations’. In contrast to formal models and their association with managerialism, collegiality with its emphasis on shared power and decision-making gained popularity from the 1980s and 1990s, aligned to school effectiveness and school improvement (Campbell and Southworth, 1993), becoming regarded as ‘the official model of good practice’ (Wallace, 1989: 182). However, Ribbins (2003) identifies that collegiality may be more complex than at first assumed. Bush (2003a) recognises that collegiality can range from ‘restricted’ to ‘pure’, depending on the extent to which power and decision-making are shared.

Distributed leadership stems from collegiality and shares many characteristics with collegiality (Bush, 2003a). Brundrett (1998: 305) defines collegiality ‘as teachers, conferring and collaborating with other teachers’. More recently, distributed leadership (Harris, 2003a; Lumby, 2003) has been the preferred term in use although dispersed and distributed leadership tend to be used interchangeably. MacBeath (2004: 34) identifies key differences between the three D’s:

‘Distributed’ leadership… contains the notion that the leader appoints or delegates others to carry out work on his behalf …something that is in the gift of a headteacher … ‘Distributive’ or ‘dispersed’, on the other hand, suggests leadership being assumed on a more democratic basis, taking influence as a right and a responsibility rather than it being bestowed as a gift.
There is a potential problem with a distributed perspective on leadership in that it may be more accurate to describe some of the processes involved as distributing management functions. It may simply be too simplistic to focus on leadership, to the exclusion of management.

4.5 Inherent Tensions in the Leader Follower Relationship

A further problem arises from a general perception across the various definitions of leadership, conceptualising leadership as a process of influence (Burton and Brundrett, 2005; Bush, 2008a; Gold, 2004; Gronn, 2006; Leithwood et al., 1999; Yukl, 2002), ‘an ability to affect outcomes’ dependant on ‘personal characteristics and expertise’ (as distinct from authority or power), often grounded in personal and professional values, shaping a vision for the school (Bush, 2003a: 97; Senge, 2006). The way leadership is conceptualised affects how leadership is practiced. Through conceptualising leadership as a relationship, the roles of follower and leader become equally important. Indeed, the distinctions between the roles ‘tend to blur’ (Harris and Muijs, 2003: 1). Northouse (2009: 58) asserts:

*In the end, the best leader is the leader who helps followers achieve the goal by attending to the task and by attending to each follower as a person. …the bottom line is that the best leaders get the job done and care about others in the process.*

Gronn (2000) on the other hand argues for a completely different analysis of schools as organisations, suggesting that conceptualising the division of labour in terms of leader and follower is unhelpful, as this separates the design from the implementation of the work, arguing what is needed is a more sophisticated analysis within which how leadership is distributed is explored beyond simply the leader empowering the follower. Gronn (2003c: 23) asserts, ‘the construct “leadership”, and the closely associated and well-rehearsed constructs “leader”, “follower” and “followership” have ceased to provide adequate ways of representing the work activities of organisations’. Gunter (2003: 126) aligns herself with that argument:

*What we need is theory and theorising that is able to recognise the complexities of how agency and structure work within practice, and so teacher motivation to act is revealed or cloaked because of the shaping influence of structures such as organisational culture which approves of or criticises such activity. In this way the emphasis is less on being or not being an official in-post leader, and more on what agents do, and how we seek to capture and understand it within real time and real-life practice.*
4.6  **Inherent Limitations in the Leadership and Management Theory**

Although much has been published, relatively little appears to be based on the analysis of data generated in schools (Harris et al., 2007). Bush (2003a: 24) suggests that within the field of educational leadership and management, a gap has developed between theory and practice: *‘theory is useful only so long as it has relevance to practice in education’*. Hoyle (1986) makes a distinction between theory-for-understanding and theory-for-practice, the latter perceived as having greater relevance for school leaders and managers. Educational leadership and management theory emanates from organization theory perceived as theory for understanding, and management theory perceived to have more direct relevance for school practice (Bush, 2003a).

Morrison (2003: 7) cautions that, *‘as an attitude and an activity, research in educational management does not exist in an objective or neutral vacuum’*. Gunter (2001) argues that over the last 30 years, school leadership became dominated by business models, stripping away the focus on educational considerations and moving to performativity (Ball, 1999) and compliance in the implementation of the reform agenda. This is despite the suggestion of many such as Davies (2005: 75) that school leaders are distinguishable from leaders in other organizations by their drive to enhance students’ learning and development, *‘They explicitly seek and want to make a difference to the schools they lead’*. Indeed, this was a key factor identified by Hay McBer Ltd. (see report by Hay McBer, 2000) in giving evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee in 1998, concluding:

> ...highly effective head teachers were the highest performing leaders when compared to other groups of senior managers in public and private sector organizations ... The role of the head is one of the most demanding ...because of the sheer range of management and leadership accountabilities.

One of the challenges faced by headteachers is their accountability for progressing the *‘current trend in the modernisation process... to reprofessionalise teachers as organisational leaders’* (Gunter, 2003: 122). A key tension identified by Gunter in that regard is that *‘while the rhetoric is of teams and empowerment, this is a very top-down model’*. Through effective leadership (rather than management) headteachers are thought to hold the skills required to motivate others to modernise schools for the 21st century (Gold, 2004). Others argue that the focus on leadership, hierarchies and post holders is unhelpful and rather, view leadership as *‘the flow of*
influence in organizations... disentangling it from any presumed automatic connection with headship’, perceiving leadership as collective and ‘present in the flow of activities in which a set of organization members find themselves enmeshed’ (Gronn, 2000: 334 and 331). Bush (2003a: 27-28) observes the majority of theories represent three key characteristics:

1. Theories tend to be normative in that they reflect beliefs about the nature of educational institutions and the behaviour of individuals within them. ...
2. Theories tend to be selective or partial in that they emphasise certain aspects of the institution at the expense of other elements. ...
3. Theories of educational management are often based on, or supported by, observation of practice in educational institutions. ...

Gunter (2003: 125; 128) argues, ‘If we are to begin with the realities of practice, and that the work of teaching and schools is distributed, then, as Gronn (2000) argues, we need to have a more sophisticated analysis of who or what does the distribution than just the leader empowering the follower’. Moreover, ‘it is less helpful to talk in terms of distributing leadership and more productive to think in terms of how teachers take up positions in relation to those who seek to do the distributing’.

Spillane (2006: 11-12) provides an alternative perspective on leadership:

‘Leadership’ refers to activities tied to the core work of the organisation that are designed by organisational members to influence the motivation, knowledge, affect, or practices of other organisational members or that are understood by organisational members as intended to influence their motivation, knowledge, affect, or practices.

This is further emphasised by Spillane & Diamond (2007: 4): ‘Our definition excludes actions intended to influence relationships that are not tied to the school’s core work’. Spillane and Diamond (2007: 149 and 154), ‘make no apologies for changing [their] minds as [they] strive to redefine what it means to take a distributed perspective based on [their] research’, suggesting ‘The distinction between management and leadership is helpful analytically… but in practice they play out in tandem’, arguing that ‘more work is needed to understand the relationship between management and leadership in practice’.

4.7 Conclusion
Harris and Beatty (2004: 243) suggest that in amongst the ‘considerable conceptual overlap’, it may indeed be a good thing that ‘the literature presents many more questions than it answers’, recognising that ‘leadership is difficult to describe,
theorize and contain’. Navigating a route through this chapter of the literature review has presented a real challenge.

Empirically based evidence as to the distinctiveness of educational leadership from management is not altogether clear. The rise of educational leadership mirrors the situation in wider public service organisations in which, since the 1980s, leadership has gained prominence. In this way, leadership is now perceived as facilitating change either to address perceived organisational failure and ‘continuous quality improvement’ (Pratt et al., 2007: 13) or to progress government-driven reform, a ‘policy lever’ for new public management or ‘managerialism’ through ‘winning consent rather than securing compliance’ (Wallace, 2011: 1; 10; 16). As with education, management has been consigned to maintenance activity, without ‘coherent and consistent understanding of what leadership is’ or ‘empirical evidence for leadership in those contexts’ (Rowing 2011; Thorpe et al., 2011: 240; 243). As with education, the cry has been for ‘no more heroes’ (Rowing, 2011). Other public-funded services such as the NHS have reflected similar government endorsed leadership development programmes experienced in education, with the aim of ‘invest[ing] in developing leaders who would, in part, operate as agents of government-driven reform’ (Wallace, 2011: 12).

Although the rhetoric is of distributing school leadership, the reality may be more closely aligned to ‘status, authority and position’ (Harris and Muijs, 2003: 1), largely related to management roles. Although leadership can be distinguished from management in theoretical terms, such distinction can be difficult or unhelpful in practice. It became important in this study to explore the way in which both the headteachers and their staff conceptualised leadership and the effects of that conceptualisation on how leadership was practiced, along with the level and type of teacher engagement in school leadership. It also became important to explore how the perceptions of leadership both by the headteachers and their staff played out in practice, including how teachers take up leadership positions within schools as organisations.

The next chapter of the literature review focuses on an exploration of distributed leadership as a distinct perspective on leadership.
Chapter Five: Literature Review - Part 3
Distributed Leadership

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter traced the development of the school leadership paradigm by focusing first on the rise of leadership as a construct in its own right, before exploring the literature around leadership as distinct from management with a particular focus on the field of education. Terms such as leadership, management and collegiality were problematised. The inherent difficulties arising from positioning leadership as distinct from management were explored. Issues with defining distributed leadership as a leadership approach and inherent tensions in the leader follower relationship were introduced. Finally, limitations in the leadership and management theory were explored with implications identified for this PhD study.

This chapter discusses distributed leadership as a distinct perspective on educational leadership and management. The review of relevant literature is structured in relation to the five research questions. What is meant by the term is explored before discussing the key characteristics of distributed leadership. The extent to which those characteristics currently operate in schools is then discussed before examining how those characteristics transpire. Finally, the main benefits and problems arising from operating a distributed perspective on leadership are discussed. Throughout, key limitations in the underlying theoretical assumptions for a distributed perspective are highlighted. In the conclusion, significant themes emerging from a review of the literature are revisited, identifying specific implications for this study.

As returned to in the conclusions chapter, managing the literature review has not been an easy process due to the nature of the literature. An emergent approach to the formation of the research questions was followed both through the underlying theoretical perspective as well as through necessity. As discussed in the methods chapter, the research questions and subsequent 360° analysis items evolved from a review of the literature.

In the next chapter, the focus turns to teacher leadership, as a distinct yet integral aspect of the paradigm of distributed leadership.
5.2 What is distributed leadership?

Bolden (2011: 253) provides a full account of the theoretical origins of distributed leadership, identifying ‘a rich and diverse array of theory and research’. Here, the origins identified by key researchers in the field referred to below are traced. Through the work of Barnard (1968), Harris (Harris et al., 2007; Harris, 2009a) traces the genesis of distributed leadership back to the 1960s, within the field of organisational theory. Alternatively, Gronn (2006) traces the term distributed leadership back to 1954 to a C.A. Gibb, an Australian psychologist who made the distinction between focused (concentrated or monopolised) and distributed leadership (shared or dispersed). More recently, Gronn (2008 and 2009a) identified the work of Benne and Sheats (1948) predating understandings from Gibb, through the identification of diffusion. Leithwood et al. (2009a: 1) regard that, ‘the actual practice of distributed leadership is as old as human efforts to organize’. Similarly, MacBeath (2009: 41) exerts:

*The earliest written record of distributed leadership is the counsel to Moses: “This is too heavy for thou cannot bear it alone” (Exodus 18: 17-18). It is a counsel with a strong contemporary relevance whether in a business or in an educational context.*

While distributed leadership has become the dominant term in educational rhetoric particularly in the UK, shared leadership has maintained its standing in the fields of nursing and medicine, and psychology (Bolden, 2011). Distributed leadership is reaching into the field of health and social care through public sector reform, the drive to revive perceived poor performance in public sector organizations and the effort to engage staff in collaborative learning and problem-solving (Currie and Lockett, 2011). That said, ‘the implementation of DL in a health and social care context faces institutional challenges related to professions and policy’ (Currie and Lockett, 2011: 293).

Although growing in response to increased complexity and ambiguity (Fitzsimons et al., 2011), interest into and exploration of distributed leadership within education is not yet reflected in the field of management and business (Bolden, 2011; Thorpe et al., 2011). However, with the parallel move from ‘traditional bureaucratic structures to new, flatter forms’, new leadership practices are being sought in business management (Ancona and Blackman, 2010: 1; Thorpe et al., 2011). Moreover, there
is ‘an imperative within organizations for them to be able to respond ever more quickly and adaptively’ with an increased pace of change (Thorpe et al., 2011: 239).

Having originally derived its understandings of management and subsequently of leadership from the field of management and business (distributed cognition and activity theory – Gronn, 2000; Spillane et al., 2004; culture change – Schein, 1985), the field of management and business is now deriving its understandings of distributed leadership from the field of education (see for example discussion and citations within Bolden, 2011; Currie and Lockett, 2011; and Thorpe et al., 2011). Within the public sector, there is limited literature available relating to distributed leadership (Brookes, 2008). However, the potential for placing an emphasis on the influence of a number of informal leaders within an organization rather than on the authority of a few formal managers has been recognized (Pratt et al., 2007; Wallace, 2011). In turn, both ‘hierarchy (designed system) and a set of networks (adaptive system)’ have been identified as key, with greater emphasis being placed more recently on the latter (Currie, 2011; Pratt et al., 2007: 18). That said, through their studies of companies ‘well known for such distributed leadership’ Ancona and Blackman (2010: 1) found that distributed leadership ‘is more complicated than we originally anticipated’. Moreover, that within a distributed perspective, there is still a place for a ‘strong centralized leader’; that distributed leadership goes beyond individual empowerment; and requires coordination and risk management (Ancona and Blackman, 2010: 2; Malby, 2007).

Leadership may have always been distributed within school organizations but as a theoretical concept, it is relatively new (Timperley, 2009). Currently, the distinctiveness of distributed leadership lies in its ‘function as a rallying-point for those commentators searching for “post-heroic” leadership alternatives’ (Gronn, 2008; Gronn, 2009b: 18; Spillane, 2005b; Woods and Gronn, 2009) and in its resonance with organisational learning within the knowledge economy (Hartley, 2010). In education, distributed leadership is, ‘a relatively “new kid on the block”’ (Gronn, 2006:1) now ‘display[ing] a number of the hallmarks of survival’ (Gronn, 2008: 141: Gronn, 2009a: 197). A review of the literature raises more questions than answers: Is distributed leadership synonymous with shared and collaborative leadership as in some authors’ use of those terms (e.g. Hallinger and Heck, 2009)? Or, should we aspire to collegiality – contrived (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992;
Hargreaves, 1994; Brundrett and Burton, 2003) or otherwise (Gronn, 2000)? Is distributed leadership simply a justification for delegation or abdication of responsibilities? Or, is it a strategic intention to develop a school as a learning community (O’Brien et al., 2003)? Why is distributed leadership the preferred term in the UK whilst shared leadership is the preferred term in the US (Bolden, 2011)? Is distributive leadership (the current favoured term of HMIE) the same as distributed leadership or is it more closely aligned to social/distributed justice?

Given much of the preceding discussion around risk management of devolved governance to and within schools (Gunter, 2012), contrived collegiality may also have enjoyed a long-term association with school organizations cloaked as distributed leadership. Contrived collegiality (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992) can be described as:

• a set of formal specific, bureaucratic procedures increasing the attention given to joint planning and consultation;
• a preliminary phase in setting up more enduring collaborative cultures;
• a slick, administrative substitute for collaboration; and
• imposed collegiality and partnership, creating a degree of inflexibility, violating the principals at the heart of teacher judgement and professionalism.

5.2.1 Limitations to Empirical Understandings

Identifying what distributed leadership is proves problematic, given the degree of debate within academic and professional discourse. The term is heavily contested (MacBeath, 2009), rarely fulfilling ‘its lofty promises’ (Duignan, 2008: 4). Competing discourses, lead to lack of consensus as to what constitutes distributed leadership theory and practice. Definitions and understandings range from normative to descriptive, leading to competing and conflicting interpretations (Leithwood et al., 2009a). The extensive range of writings on and around the subject, lacks empirical substance (Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood et al., 2009a and 2009b; Robinson, 2009; Spillane et al., 2007; Spillane et al., 2009a), leading to limitations in empirical understandings.

Furthermore, the evolution of distributed leadership suffers from conceptual confusion. Perhaps in its simplest interpretation, distributed leadership could be viewed as one aspect of strategic management (Middlewood and Lumby, 1998).
However, separating leadership (transformation) from management (maintenance) could be regarded as a fabricated binary (Gunter, 2004; Fitzgerald and Gunter, 2008). Spillane (Spillane and Diamond, 2007: 146) circumvents that issue: ‘we use the term distributed perspective on leadership and management intentionally’ since, ‘in the daily work of schools the same activities or organizational routines can involve both leadership and management’ (Spillane et al., 2009b: 88).

As with leadership, distributed leadership has been artificially positioned for pragmatic purposes and political gain, seized upon as ‘a mantra for reshaping leadership practice’ (Louis et al., 2009: 157). As previously argued, management was devolved to school level as a product of central government reform leading to devolved regulation, monitoring and accountability (Ball, 1994). Leadership and its distribution were positioned within the policy direction of successive UK governments seeking to develop a workforce skilled to enable education reform (Gunter, 2008 and 2012). The perspective of a singular school leader became outdated, as the job became too big and too complex for an individual to address (Duignan, 2008: 2-3). Moreover, ‘the huge financial investments by governments in “top-down” models of systemic change ha[d] given little return’ (Day, 2009: 121). Leadership at all levels was positioned as a requirement in the agenda for continuous school improvement (Hallinger and Heck, 2009), with ‘a growing appreciation of just how much influence people not occupying formal administrative roles actually do have in schools’ with only ‘mixed and indirect’ evidence ‘to justify a belief in these consequences’ (Leithwood et al., 2009a: xvii; 3).

Distributed leadership is a government endorsed strategy (Gronn, 2009b) for progressing an agenda of ‘meeting externally set performance targets’, providing ‘subtle and clever ways to deliver standardised packages of government reforms and performance targets’ (Hargreaves and Fink, 2009: 191). New managerialism created new identities, work and cultures with remodelling based on a discourse derived from private sector models. Writers promoting that policy direction were canonised whilst those who did not experienced ‘being written out of the present as well as recent history’ (Gunter, 2008: 254 and 2012).

Leithwood et al. (2009b: 269) describe the field of distributed leadership as, ‘an area of study in an adolescent stage of development’, having lost its naïve confidence,
currently struggling with complex identity issues, striving for a measure of independence whilst acknowledging its parental influence. There are, within its current growth spurt, ‘efforts to grapple with normative and descriptive purposes for engaging with the distributed leadership concept’ (Leithwood et al., 2009b: 269). Harris and Spillane (2008: 32) consider the concept of distributed leadership to be enjoying current popularity because of three key reasons: it has normative power, reflecting current changes in practice; it has representational power, due to increased external demands and pressures placed on schools; and it has empirical power, through a small but increasing number of studies highlighting ‘a powerful relationship between distributed forms of leadership and positive organisational change (Harris et al., 2007)’. Gronn (2009a) considers that rather than a new way of conceptualising school leadership, distributed leadership was a natural progression from earlier management theory and research, interrupted by the promotion of the heroic single leader.

5.2.2 Understandings from Key Researchers Within the Field of Distributed Leadership

A significant amount of material has been written around distributed leadership much of which lacks empirical substance. Instead of providing a review of all available literature, key voices contributing to empirical understandings of the field are highlighted in what follows.

According to Duignan (2008: 1), the work of Spillane (2006), Harris (2002; 2006), Mulford (2007) and Elmore (2000) are ‘pre-eminent among theorists in the area’. A review of the more recent literature certainly identifies the prominence of Harris and Spillane. Harris (2005; 2009a: 15) draws heavily on the work of Spillane, regarding him one of the most influential thinkers in leadership: ‘The “Distributed Leadership Study” (Spillane et al., 2001) undoubtedly remains the largest contemporary study of distributed leadership practice in schools’ - conducted over four years; examining the practice of leadership (as the product of the interactions of school leaders, followers and their situation) in Chicago elementary schools; focusing specifically on mathematics, science and literacy instruction; understandings from which underpin Spillane’s distributed perspective. Unusually, Spillane’s work incorporates a central focus on the headteacher’s daily work (see for example Spillane et al., 2007 and Spillane et al., 2009b) as one aspect of a distributed perspective. Spillane has been very much influenced by Gronn’s work (Spillane, personal conversation, July 28,
recognising himself as ‘someone who is closely identified with the provenance of this idea’ (Gronn, 2009b: 39). Spillane et al. (2004) and Gronn (2000) identify distributed cognition and activity theory as the theoretical foundations for their perspective. Gronn (2009b) broadly aligns his perspective as similar to that of Gibb (1954), particularly in relation to hybrid leadership as discussed later.

Harris and Spillane (2008: 31) came together to co-author in 2008, exploring ‘a distributed leadership perspective’ within which, the work of all individuals who contribute to leadership practice is acknowledged. Harris (2006) views distributed leadership as the connective tissue supporting organisational innovation and learning, building on her earlier work (Harris and Lambert, 2003) identifying two fundamental principles underpinning distributed leadership: the broad based involvement of staff along with appropriate staff development; and agency to influence and change.

Harris (2005: 6-7) does not consider distributed leadership to be restricted to specific patterns or forms, organisational structure or formally recognised positions. Instead, she views distributed leadership as emerging from ‘the actions and interactions of individuals engaged in problem solving or developmental work’ as the ‘product of debate, dialogue and discussion that results in action rather than a set of leadership tasks, responsibilities or functions that someone has to undertake or is given’. It is the interaction between rather than the action of individuals, which is of interest. Spillane et al. (2004) consider such interaction takes place between the actors, artefacts and situation found in schools. We can see through Harris’ (2005: 25) setting out of three conditions representing the fundamental principles of distributed leadership how her work is aligned to Spillane’s:

1. Distributed leadership means focusing on the practice of leadership – which is more important than the function or outcome.
2. Distributed leadership means paying attention to the interactions between people – these are just as important as the actions they undertake.
3. Distributed leadership means acknowledging that situation shapes and influences the form that distributed leadership takes in schools – it may vary according to the context.

However, both Harris (2005) and Spillane focus their research on understanding leadership by exploring leadership tasks. This seems to contain an inherent contradiction. Although in fairness, Spillane views his conception of a ‘task’ as more complex than my own (Spillane, personal conversation, July 28, 2009).
Harris (2008) continues to develop her perspective on distributed leadership, exploring its relevance to developing leaders at all levels of the school system through five case studies situating a distributed perspective in school practice. Harris also (2009b: 241) edited a book drawing together different perspectives on distributed leadership across a range of authors, reviewing the evidence base and exploring what is currently known about its connection with organizational change, concluding:

*We need to know much more about the barriers, unintended consequences and limitations of distributed leadership before offering any advice, giving prescription or advocating theories of action.*

More recently, Harris (2009c: 258) moved away from Spillane's work to consider Weick’s (1976) perspective on ‘loosely and tightly coupled systems’, focusing on ‘the structural alignment, composition and patterns of distributed leadership practice’, perceiving imagery to be ‘particularly helpful in representing different forms of distributed leadership practice’. In so doing, through her research with school networks in England, Harris (2009c) has identified a typology of four forms of distributed leadership practice: ad hoc, autocratic, additive and autonomous distribution.

Spillane continues to develop his perspective on distributed leadership, more recently in relation to ‘diagnosis and design for school improvement’ (Spillane and Coldren, 2011: 26), emphasising the importance of a shared definition of leadership to avoid colleagues ‘talking past one another’. Spillane and Coldren (2011: 78) define leadership as ‘a relationship of social influence’. Across his work, Spillane advocates a distributed perspective on leadership as a lens or analytical framework with which to view practice (the product of or intersection between interaction connecting school leaders, followers and their situation), involving ‘two aspects: the leader-plus and the practice aspect’ (Spillane, 2006; Spillane and Diamond, 2007; Spillane *et al*., 2009b: 92). Spillane’s practice aspect builds on the work of Bourdieu (1981: 310; 190) in relation to ‘the urgency of practice’ and ‘habitus’. This is similar to Gronn’s (2006: 4) view of leadership meaning ‘influencing others to do what they might not otherwise have done’. Influence within leadership begins to look like previous conceptions of power (as with Sørhaug, 1996 discussed in Moos, 2010).
5.2.3 Alternative Perspectives

Understandings of distributed leadership are still very much developing. Some would argue a distributed perspective has a way to go in its evolution. Gronn (2009a: 197) suggests, *just as distributed leadership appears to have come into its own, it would be profitable to begin thinking beyond it*, bucking the trend for presenting distributed leadership in unproblematic terms. Part of the difficulty in coming to an understanding of distributed leadership links back to the inherent difficulty with defining leadership. Over the years, Gronn has openly wrestled with this: *But this claim begs an important question, namely: what is leadership?* (Gronn, 2006: 4). He contends that scholars remain divided over a definition for leadership, suggesting that his own might alter depending on the purpose of the discussion. In so doing, Gronn repeatedly exposes the underlying conceptual confusion, to encourage theorists and practitioners alike to grapple with the inherent complexities of a distributed perspective.

Jarvis’ (2008) positioning of leadership perhaps points to one of the underlying problems in the literature. Many perspectives and theories of leadership *allow for only a two-fold division of labour: leader and followers*, making no allowance for the reality and complexity of the labour process, imposing an additional set of roles on formal roles established within school structures (Gronn, 2006: 4). Duignan (2008) and Gunter (Fitzgerald and Gunter, 2006 and 2008; Fitzgerald *et al*., 2006) are also critical of the hierarchical positioning of leadership. Harris (2005) and Spillane (2005a and 2005b) frame the role ‘follower’ differently from the conventional view, insofar as in shaping leadership practice, leaders are equally influenced by followers. Timperley (2009: 220) asserts, *the way followers interpret the situation and respond to the leader influences how leaders think and act*. However, an alternative view (Leithwood *et al*., 2009b: 269) argues that school hierarchies are necessary for coordination and strategic direction within which, *the concept of leadership still depends on the concept of followership to have any meaning at all*.

To deny the hierarchical structures embedded within Scottish schools would be to deny the need to problematise the ‘lived reality’ (Spillane and Coldren, 2011) from the perspective of staff working within those structures. Part of the tension inherent within a distributed perspective is the disjunction between leadership work and
leadership structures. On the one hand, most school systems contain formal hierarchies. On the other hand (Robinson, 2009: 225):

_Leaders emerge as a function of the task, the characteristics of other group members, the constraints imposed by formal authority relations and the inclination and skill of the group members. ...both leaders and followers have a transient status_

Gronn (2008; 2009b: 17; 19) currently favours the term hybrid leadership representing ‘mixed leadership patterns’, ‘characterizing an emerging state of affairs’ rather than a new type of leadership. Hybridity encompasses, ‘the intermingling of both hierarchical and heterarchical modes of ordering responsibilities and relations’, ‘reflect[ing] more accurately the mix of the work of solo, dyad and team leadership than “distributed”’ (Gronn, 2008: 150; 152). Gronn (2009a: 199) calls for researchers to adopt the rubric of ‘hybridity’: ‘varying combinations and degrees of both concentrated and distributed leadership, the balance and form of which may oscillate over time’. Gronn (2009b) identifies that within Scottish policy discourse, the possibility of a hybrid perspective is glimpsed through HMIE’s (2006a: 93) view of leadership as ‘both individual and shared’. Furthermore, drawing on the work of Knox (1953), Gronn (2009b) contends that hybrid leadership more accurately reflects the Scottish school perspective within which, headteachers historically held limited authority over their colleagues and patterns of leadership developed in context specific ways.

Through his case study analysis of one Australian secondary school, Gronn (2009b: 35) asserts that ‘hybridity represents an attempt by schools to accommodate contingency’, to ‘try to maximise their means of acquiring knowledge’, building collective intelligence. Moreover, hybridity (Gronn, 2009a: 209; 214; 210) describes more accurately than distributed, ‘the mix of the combined work of solo, dyad and team leadership formations’, and the ‘diverse patterns of practice which fuse or coalesce hierarchical and heterarchical elements of emergent activities’, raising key questions:

_First, is it leadership we are talking about or is it something else [such as power], and how do we know? Second, is distributed leadership merely another way of talking about democratic leadership? Third, what does it mean to describe leadership practice as “hybrid”?_

Through their case study analysis of nine Australian schools, Andrews and Crowther (2002: 152; 155) in calling for a concerted change to how school-based leadership
is interpreted, propose the concept of parallel leadership as providing, ‘a leadership foundation upon which successful school reform can be built’. Parallel leadership or ‘parallelism’ is perceived as context specific, encompassing ‘three distinct qualities of mutual trust and respect; a sense of shared directionality; and allowance for individual expression’. Crowther et al. (2009: 53) describe parallel leadership as:

*a process whereby teacher leaders and their principals engage in collective action to build school capacity.*

Through their case study analysis of three Singapore schools based on the work of Crowther and his colleagues, Ng et al. (2005: 1) assert: ‘parallel leadership challenges teachers and members of the school management to establish a more collaborative working relationship’ within which ‘both principals and teachers engage in collective thought and action’. Within a parallel leadership perspective, the distinct and complementary leadership roles of formal and informal leaders coexist in ‘mutualistic working relationships’ (Andrews and Crowther, 2002: 157). The headteacher remains ultimately accountable, retaining overall power, authority and responsibility for strategic development. Simultaneously, the headteacher utilises a mechanism for progressing school improvement through engaging colleagues, with teacher leadership focused on pedagogic development. Teacher leadership becomes key, as explored in the next chapter.

### 5.3 What are the key characteristics of distributed leadership?
Distributed leadership is complex. Its key characteristics reside beyond simplistic descriptions.

#### 5.3.1 Beyond Delegation
Sometimes it is easier to identify what something is by first identifying what it is not. Within the theory (Hargreaves, 2005: 181), a clear distinction is generally made between delegation and distributed leadership, ‘a sophisticated web of interrelationships and connections’.

#### 5.3.2 Beyond Formal Position
Multiple formal and informal leaders exist within a distributed perspective (Spillane *et al.*, 2004), sharing a range of leadership activities regardless of designation (Spillane, 2006; Harris and Spillane, 2008), involving collective leadership responsibility rather than hierarchical authority (Harris, 2004a and 2005: 9): ‘It is not
about giving others tasks or responsibilities but recognising that leadership practice is constructed through shared action and interaction’. Indeed, Gronn (2002) suggests distributed leadership involves spontaneous collaboration, engaging expertise wherever it resides rather than limited to formal position.

5.3.3 Beyond a Singular Representation

Although generally referred to in the singular, many writers acknowledge distributed leadership practice is more complex, affected by a number of factors such as the headteacher him/herself, the school’s history and culture, and external pressures (MacBeath, 2009). This leads different authors to describe distributed leadership in terms of models (e.g. MacBeath, 2005) or a taxonomy (e.g. Gronn, 2002). Researchers explore the structure for distribution in different ways: formal; equally both formal and informal (Spillane, 2005a); fluid and emergent (Gronn, 2000).

Spillane (2006; 2009b) identified three arrangements representing the distribution of leadership and management labour across people: collaborative, collective and coordinated distribution. Mascall et al. (2009) propose four patterns of distributed leadership: planful alignment; spontaneous alignment; spontaneous misalignment and anachic misalignment. Hargreaves (2008: 10) proposes a continuum or scale of distributed leadership practice ranging from ‘too hot’ (anarchy) to ‘too cold’ (autocracy). The National College of School Leadership (NCSL) (2004) proposes five dimensions to distributing leadership – instruct, consult, delegate, facilitate, neglect – the first and last dimension perceived as negative. MacBeath (2009) in drawing from a project conducted for the NCSL encompassing eleven case studies, identifies six forms of distribution, within a developmental sequence, taxonomy or continuum: formal, pragmatic, strategic, incremental, opportunistic and cultural. Such discussion might be perceived as unimportant save for MacBeath’s (2009: 44-45) contention that:

the most successful leadership would… convey an understanding of all these different expressions of distribution and would be able to operate in each model as appropriate to the situation and to the stage of development of the school.

And, save for the suggestion from recent studies that the construction of leadership distribution has importance, with specific patterns impacting more positively than others on organisational change and improvement (Leithwood et al., 2009c).
5.3.4 Beyond a Unified View of Practice

Distributed leadership appears very much context specific (Harris, 2005: 24). Refreshingly, Harris (2007) identifies what, in her view, is distributed: responsibility; authority; power; accountability; risk-taking; innovation; influence. Harris (2007) also identifies three levels of distributed leadership. The surface level involves a reallocation of roles and responsibilities. The subterranean level involves new ways of working and interactions crossing existing organisational boundaries. The deep level involves the co-construction of knowledge.

Spillane (Spillane, 2006: 61; Spillane and Coldren, 2011) explores how the practice of leading and managing can be distributed in three ways through collaborated, collective or coordinated distribution, each involving ‘different sorts of interdependencies that pose both similar and different challenges for leadership practice’. Spillane et al. (2009b: 99; 100) maintain, ‘the set of school staff across whom leadership is distributed varies from activity to activity’, and ‘the manner in which the leadership and management work that the school principal participates in is distributed across people differ[ently] depending on the particular activity’. Unlike many proponents of distributed leadership, Spillane (Spillane and Coldren, 2011: 39) seeks to explore distributed leadership as it is situated within school practice, problematising a number of tensions inherent in that perspective:

Situations involving collaborated, collective, or coordinated distribution can be fraught with tension and conflict, with leaders working, either consciously or subconsciously, toward differing or perhaps even opposing ends. Moreover, informal leaders can emerge in the performance of an organizational routine and work to undermine the goals of those who are responsible for executing it.

Anderson et al. (2009: 112) found that patterns of distributed leadership varied within the same school and that ‘school goals that target student learning provide more scope for leadership distribution and coordination than goals that focus on implementation of specific programs and practices’. How headteachers distributed leadership for direction setting was strongly influenced by how they perceived and enacted their influence in the context of external ‘policies, priorities, and leadership traditions’ (Anderson et al., 2009: 125; 128). Patterns of leadership distribution and influence could vary for different improvement foci within the same school: ‘The more encompassing the goal, the greater the likelihood that multiple sources of leadership will be involved, and the greater the range of goal-related activities to
which leadership might be attributed’. This led Anderson et al. (2009: 133) to call for a distinction to be made both analytically and practically ‘between school level and goal- or initiative-specific patterns of leadership distribution in schools’.

5.3.5 Beyond Aspects of the Remunerated Post

Trust appears to be a fundamental precondition for a distributed perspective (Dinham, 2009; Louis et al., 2009; MacBeath, 2009: 55), ‘counterpointed with the imperative of accountability’ particularly in relation to external accountability pressures and the juxtaposition of which senior leaders struggle to resolve. Murphy et al. (2009: 183) identified ‘trust between teachers and administrative leaders’ as being ‘at the very heart of distributed leadership work’, as a prerequisite to the required transformation in relationships.

Drawing on their own study and from others’ studies, Mascall et al. (2009: 86; 87) also suggest that trust is fundamentally integral to relationships within a distributed perspective and, that headteachers ‘can build trust between themselves and their teachers, but they have little influence on the trust that teachers feel among themselves’, important since, ‘In organizations with high levels of trust, individuals are comfortable in seeking help from others and learning from their coworkers’. MacBeath’s (2009: 55) NCSL study found that, ‘without mutual trust among teachers, the latitude for a more opportunistic or cultural form of distributed leadership was undermined’. Fitzgerald et al. (2006) identified a high level of trust, along with respect and autonomy, as integral to the leadership of learning.

Hoy et al. (2006: 425) conceived the term ‘academic optimism’ with its three dimensions of academic emphasis, faculty trust and collective efficacy, as a new construct used to explain pupil achievement, finding there was a significant connection between achievement and academic optimism. Within academic optimism were situated three teacher beliefs: trust, collective efficacy and academic emphasis. Mascall et al. (2009: 85) adopted an adapted version of Hoy et al.’s academic optimism, replacing academic emphasis with organizational citizenship behaviour [OCB] to capture ‘the willingness of teachers to engage in work with their colleagues outside of their own classrooms’ thought to be essential for successful change in schools. OCB, derived from the work of Organ (1988), indicates
behaviours… not required as part of the job, but… offered in order to help others in the organization’ (Mascall et al., 2009: 85).

Building on the work of Mayrowetz and Smylie (2004), Louis et al. (2009: 158) perceive distributed leadership as work redesign, necessary in order for ‘teachers to conceive of their roles differently and to assume different responsibilities, mostly beyond the classroom and often for purposes of school-level improvement’. Both teachers and headteacher need to perceive of their jobs differently (Leithwood et al., 2009c; Mayrowetz et al., 2009: 168; Murphy et al., 2009): ‘as teachers’ jobs are redefined in this model, so too must administrators’ jobs if they are to maintain their function as supporting teachers and setting the conditions for their success’.

Mayrowetz et al. (2009: 188) identify motivation, sense-making and learning as three transitional mechanisms for school staff engaging in leadership, along with organizational history and stability, organizational structure, organizational and professional culture, relational trust, and micropolitics as five moderator/antecedent variables to the formulation and implementation of distributed leadership. This is very much reflected in the work of Murphy et al. (2009) who go further to explore the headteacher’s role in making each a reality (as discussed below). Louis et al. (2009) identify sense-making as centrally important in developing motivation for performance, and trust as a precursor to and moderator of that sense-making as well as influencing the practice of distributed leadership. By framing distributed leadership with a focus on changing school and classroom conditions, teachers are more likely to make sense of their new role within a distributed perspective.

5.3.6 Beyond Simplistic Views of the Post Heroic Leader Rhetoric

Beyond the politically endorsed rhetoric, emerging empirical findings suggest distributed leadership does not necessarily negate the need for formal leaders, particularly headteachers. The headteacher’s facilitating role forms a paradox within a distributed perspective (Hallinger and Heck, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2009c; Louis et al., 2009; Mayrowetz et al., 2009) in which ‘school principals figure very prominently’ (Leithwood et al., 2009b: 279; Murphy et al., 2009). Both Gronn and Spillane recognise the importance of the relationship and interactions between formal and informal leaders. In their work, the leadership role of the headteacher remains key (Spillane et al., 2009b). However, there is little empirical data available
to shed light on the role of the headteacher within a distributed perspective. Even Spillane’s work (for example: Spillane et al., 2009b: 94) seems limited in setting out to ‘captur[e] management and leadership in schools through principals’ interactions with others in particular places and times during a school day’ with a focus on administration, curriculum and instruction related activities.

A number of recently published studies have identified the key role of the headteacher within a distributed perspective. The findings from Anderson et al.’s (2009: 112) multi-site case study of the principal’s role in the distribution of leadership in five American schools ‘highlight[ed] the prominence of principals in determining alternative patterns of leadership distribution at the school level and in relation to specific improvement goals and initiatives’. Hallinger and Heck (2009: 105; 114) analysed data from empirical studies available on distributed leadership for school improvement in one American state, concluding that through their role in ‘being catalysts for change, maintaining the improvement focus, facilitating the leadership of others, supporting instructional effectiveness, and providing tangible support for staff and students’, distributed leadership did ‘not appear to lessen the importance of the principal’s own leadership role’. Indeed, Leithwood et al. (2009c) found that a distributed perspective placed increased demands on the headteacher’s role in relation to increased coordination, building leadership capability in staff, monitoring others’ leadership work and providing constructive feedback to those engaged in leadership work. Similarly, Murphy et al. (2009: 181) in their case study of an American middle school (as part of a larger longitudinal study of six schools) concluded that the headteacher’s role was pivotal in ‘work[ing] to overcome culture, structural and professional barriers to create a leadership dense organisation’.

Day (2009) conducted a case study over seven years in England into one headteacher’s role in her first headship, focused on turning a school around threatened with closure. He found the headteacher concerned moved through four phases of development: coming out of special measures; taking ownership within an inclusive agenda; going deeper and wider to sustain momentum; striving for excellence and creativity within which everyone was perceived as a leader. Day (2009: 121; 136) contends, ‘whilst there may be many leaders in a school, the principal is the key to bringing about and sustaining successful change’, asserting
the school’s turnaround was ‘in no small measure due to the values, qualities and skills of its headteacher’. In Day’s (2009) view, it is the headteacher who encourages stakeholders to participate in and develop a sense of ownership for school improvement processes and outcomes, leading to commitment for sustained change.

Mayrowetz et al.’s (2009: 179) study of six schools engaged in distributed leadership reform efforts found that headteachers, through their formal authority and accountability, played a key role in establishing and maintaining a coherent vision, avoiding incoherence. Dinham’s study (2005 as reported in 2009: 142) of 38 government secondary schools with exceptional educational outcomes in New South Wales, identified the key role of the headteacher in, for example, encouraging and supporting others ‘to develop and exercise their own leadership’. Mascall et al. (2009: 82) analysed data from an empirical study into leadership practice in one Canadian school district asserting:

\[ \text{leadership distribution not only exists in parallel with traditional individual leadership, but that the extent of leadership distribution is dependent on strong individual leadership from a formal leader.} \]

Timperley’s (2009) study of seven New Zealand elementary schools focusing on school improvement initiatives found that headteachers played a key role within a distributed perspective. Leithwood et al.’s (2009c) qualitative study of eight elementary and secondary schools in phase one of a two-stage multi-method study situated in Ontario based its hypothesis on Gronn’s work, conceptualising four patterns of distributed leadership: planful alignment, spontaneous alignment, spontaneous misalignment and anarchic misalignment. That study found that planful alignment even when leadership was distributed to teams, was dependent on the headteacher.

5.4 To what extent do those characteristics currently operate in schools?
In the UK, distributed school leadership has been politically endorsed. The policy direction and policy documents are full of the rhetoric of distributed leadership. It forms the popular discourse of contemporary school education literature although is seldom defined. Staff in schools may attribute different meanings to the term and its practice (Duignan, 2008: 4): ‘It is unwise to assume because we share a common language or use a specific term that we all share a common meaning’.
Regardless, formal school structures have been established to facilitate distributed leadership. In England, since the 1988 Education Reform Act (DES, 1988) and in Scotland, since the 2001 introduction of TP21 (SEED, 2001): the role of curriculum co-ordinators expanded; middle-management roles included more institution-wide responsibilities, and more explicit staff management and leadership functions (Bell, 2007). As discussed in the next chapter, teacher leadership has been promoted to engage teachers in leadership for school improvement. However, due to the limited amount of empirical data (much of which is referred to within this chapter), the extent to which the characteristics of distributed leadership currently operate in schools is unclear. Moreover, although recognised, the context specific nature of distributed leadership (Louis et al., 2009; Mascall et al., 2009: 82) has not been adequately explored, despite the likelihood of distributed leadership varying ‘according to the conditions found in the particular organization’.

Spillane (2005a) contends that distributed leadership inevitably exists in school contexts, whereas Timperley (2005; 2009: 197) contends there is an almost inevitable existence since it is ‘typically distributed’, and Gronn (2000) that its existence is likely, desirable and necessary. Spillane (2005a) views distributed leadership as an inevitable process since leadership practice is a product of the interaction between formal and informal school leaders, actively co-construing followers and their situation. However, rather than being task focused, authentic distributed leadership relates to shared responsibility and power, often not the case in practice (Duignan, 2008), representing little more than ‘misguided delegation’ (Harris, 2004a: 20).

The nature of the teacher’s remit leads some to argue that all teachers play a leadership role (Goleman, 2002: 14), leadership residing ‘in every person at entry level who, in one way or another, acts as a leader’. Harris’ (2005) view is slightly more guarded advocating that all staff represent a source of leadership potential. Rhodes and Brundrett (2008: 23) caution that in developing ‘their own talent pool’, schools should carefully consider that not every staff member may ‘possess a predisposition to undertake a leadership role’. Slater (2008: 60) further suggests the capability to step into a leadership role ‘does not come easily to every team
member, and often requires unique insight and support from the formal leader’. This theme is returned to in the next chapter on teacher leadership.

Headteachers can find it equally difficult to adapt to a new role, ‘letting go’ and accepting changes in power structures (Leithwood et al., 2009c). Pascal and Ribbins (1998: 35) in one of the few studies of its time eliciting the views and experiences of primary headteachers from in-depth qualitative life-story type methods, found there were four phases of incumbency (development or career progression) for the ten headteachers studied: initiation, development, autonomy and advancement. It was only at the autonomy stage, after eight or more years of headship, that the heads advocated a collegial or teamwork approach, perceiving their role as ‘just one element of a mutually interdependent team’.

Day et al. (2007b: 19) identified that leadership practices were widely distributed in the most effective schools. However, Harris (2005: 14) cautions that whilst distributed leadership may have a strong theoretical basis, examples of it in practice are difficult to find, attributed in part to a gradual shift from vertical to lateral forms of leadership. Furthermore, Harris and Spillane (2008: 32) acknowledge, ‘how leadership is distributed and with what effect is relatively uncharted territory’.

5.5 How do those characteristics come about?
Due to the small number of empirical studies exploring the theory of distributed leadership in school practice (Hallinger and Heck, 2009; Harris 2009a and 2009b; Leithwood et al., 2009a and 2009b) and the smaller number of empirical studies into the headteacher’s role within such practice (Murphy et al., 2009), it is difficult to ascertain from the literature how the characteristics of distributed leadership have come about. This study set out to find out more, exploring whether the characteristics of distributed leadership came about naturally or through purposeful planning within the three case studies’ schools.

5.5.1 Understanding of Distributed Leadership
Day et al. (2007b) identified that headteachers largely determined the nature and pattern of distribution according to their own view of leadership and stage of development, as well as their perception of the readiness of their staff to take on greater leadership. Similarly, Murphy et al. (2009) found that the headteacher was
instrumental in initiating and nurturing distributed leadership. The NCSL (2004, 3.1: 7) asserts, 'distributed leadership was usually given, not taken'. That being the case, there are major implications for policy and practice. The NCSL (2004) describe six processes a head could employ, depending on the situation: formal distribution (within hierarchical structures); pragmatic distribution (ad hoc by nature); strategic distribution (goal oriented); incremental distribution (a measured ‘letting go’); opportunistic distribution (dispersed, taken rather than given); and cultural distribution (embedded in the organisation, based on agency and reciprocity).

Gronn (2002; 2006: 4; 5) contends that leadership may be shared or dispersed according to two forms, either aggregated or holistic. An aggregated pattern represents practice where several individuals, at different times, within different activities, for varying durations and for various reasons, ‘are believed by their colleagues to exercise leadership’. In contrast, although ‘powerfully real’, a holistic pattern is more subtle and difficult to explain:

Holism finds practical expression in close working partnerships in the workplace between two or more people, where the understanding between them is such that they know instinctively how the other will respond.

Gronn’s notion of holistic forms of leadership relates closely to Spillane’s (2006) notion of person-plus leadership. Regardless of the form distributed leadership takes, Gronn (2006: 4) identifies that it is the relationships between colleagues which are key, they are ‘well-rehearsed, their skills are complementary, their personal dispositions are compatible and they often share similar values’. He encapsulates those features within the term ‘synergy’ through which, colleagues ‘jointly occupy an expanded role space’.

However, the notion of synergy could be misleading if misinterpreted. Although Gronn does not propose this, it could be conceived that distributed leadership comes naturally and is easy to create and maintain. Duignan (2008) cautions that whilst there is a perception held by many that in distributing duties, tasks and responsibilities within an organisation, the leadership breadth and depth will increase and overall capacity will grow, the reality may be somewhat different in practice. A more complex view of distributed leadership would hold that certain factors are necessary for it to thrive, some of which are now discussed.
5.5.2 Understanding of the School as An Organisation

Public sector organisations differ from private services in relation to customers, markets, price and products (Kinder, 2011). Public sector professionalism is changing as the workplace becomes increasingly complex, requiring quick and creative responses to competing challenges, leading to an 'evolution of professions' which ‘at least in part is occurring bottom-up: grounded in localised practice and learning’ (Kinder, 2008: 2). The management of schools compared to other public sector organisations is unique due to ‘high degrees of organizational autonomy and external penetration’ (Wiseman: 2004: 166). Teachers ‘exercise professional judgement based upon specialist education and cumulated wisdom… central to the status and social esteem of professions’ (Kinder, 2008: 4). Professional wisdom is ‘a problem-solving ability involving judgement, evolved by reflection on problems and solutions, informed by codified formal knowledge and instrumentalities and practice which is relevant to situated practice’ and ‘socially constructed’ (Kinder: 2008: 3; 7). Kinder’s (2008) view of professional wisdom shares similarities to Fox’s (2009: 47) discussion of Flyvberg’s (2001) concept of ‘arationality’, involving ‘intuition and professional judgement’:

From the perspective of service management, learning and innovation are considered key for performance improvement, 'learning-in-organisations [being] the central resource of public agencies' (Kinder, 2011: 1). The term ‘organizational learning’ has been present and loosely used (Garvin, 2000) in the management literature for decades, gaining recognition since the 1990s, developing two main strands to emphasise either technical or social processes (Easterby-Smith et al., 1999). Distributed cognition (Cole and Engestrom, 1993; Pea, 1993; Salomon and Perkins, 1998) or social learning inspired by Vygotsky, 'conceptualises cognition in social and semiotically mediated contexts' (Kinder, 2008: 6). Learning is considered a social process situated in context (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Senge’s (2006: 3-4) work around learning organisations has been heavily influential in conceptualizations of the school as a learning organisation:

*The organizations that will truly excel in the future will be the organizations that discover how to tap people’s commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organization.*

The learning organization is premised upon the significance of informal networks and groupings. Senge (2006) considers learning organizations to draw from the five
disciplines of personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, team learning and systems thinking (the ‘fifth discipline’), working at the three levels of practices and principles, studied and mastered to become integrated into the essences of our lives. In his conceptualization of mental models, Senge (2006: 9) draws from the work of Schon and Argyris (see Argyris and Schon, 1978; Schon, 1991) with respect to the importance of reflection in and on action within which organisational members ‘expose their own thinking effectively and make that thinking open to the influence of others’ through dialogue. Similarly, Garvin (2000) regards critical reflection as intensive learning, emphasising intelligence gathering, experience and experimentation in learning organizations. In this way, organizational learning is an active process involving reflexive inquiry (Argyris and Schon, 1978). In practice, this can be problematic since ‘the close examination of one’s professional performance is personally threatening’ (Stenhouse, 1975: 159). Communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) or professional learning communities (Stoll et al., 2006) help to create conducive environments for critical reflection on shared practice. Communities of practice ‘connect learners, situations and knowledge with evolving practice and with change …driv[ing] practice innovation by focusing on contextually-relevant problem-solving’ (Kinder, 2008: 8). In this way, learning is viewed as a process of social participation (Houle, 1980) rather than individual enterprise.

Fox (2009) provides a detailed discussion of the liberal and interchangeable use of the terms ‘collegial’ and ‘collaborative’ as the approved discourse within the current policy context in relation to the promotion of collaborative practice. Hammersley-Fletcher (2005: 47) makes a distinction between working collaboratively and distributed leadership, requiring ‘new levels of professionalism’ for which, the headteacher role is key in legitimizing, promoting and enabling changes to conceptions of teachers as professionals. Fox’s (2009: 207) findings suggest that despite the promotion of such approaches and the legitimization of their role within collaborative school practices, Chartered Teachers face considerable challenges when engaging with a collaborative perspective: ‘It would appear that the promoted and the unpromoted don’t talk easily to each other about power, control, accountability, trust and respect’. Furthermore, MacDonald (2004) found, despite the policy and professional rhetoric, teachers locate authority within the headteacher role, complying with that authority through choice and imposition. This suggests that
despite the rhetoric, schools are still developing professional knowledge, understanding and practice in relation to becoming mature learning organisations. Hammersley-Fletcher and Brundrett (2008: 15) argue:

there perhaps needs to be a greater honesty about where authority lies, who has a right to exercise it and when, together with a greater understanding of the complexity of the head teacher’s position as the school leader and what can reasonably be asked of them.

5.5.3 Understanding of School Culture

In order for distributed leadership to thrive, it would seem reasonable to anticipate that headteachers need a clear understanding of how the school as an organisation is composed, to ‘be assertive in reshaping structures in the service of developing a deeper pool of leadership’ (Murphy et al., 2009: 186). However, changing organisational structures does not go far enough. Each school is uniquely made up of groups organised in line with their values and needs or organised to reach desired ends through defined policies, structures, resources and activities (Beare et al., 1989). Organisations are manifestations of the way people relate to each other through their beliefs. As such, an understanding of the people within an organisation and their beliefs is fundamentally important, working towards an agreed set of desired ends or goals, balancing the needs of the individuals with those of the organisation.

In addition to the formally instituted pattern of authority, rules and procedures (Harling 1984), an awareness of culture and sub culture(s) is also critical. ‘Culture’ is a more complex concept than organization, providing the glue that binds the organisation’s parts together. It provides meaning to objects or actions, determining who and what is most valued, and who is marginalised within the values and power systems. As such, a headteacher needs to understand a school’s unique culture since it can sustain or work against the school as an organization.

Studies into organisational culture generally recognise that collective patterns of behaviour influence the conduct and understandings of an organisation (Alvesson, 2002). Mayrowetz et al. (2009) identified organizational culture as offering either the key or a significant impediment to distributed leadership reform, headteachers exerting considerable influence over professional culture (as one aspect of organizational culture) through for example, the promotion of teacher leadership and collective learning. Leithwood et al. (2009c: 247) found ‘distributed patterns of
leadership are nurtured… by an organizational culture which is open, encourages strong staff commitment to students and is free of favoritism and internal dissent’, headteachers playing a key role in developing cultural norms conducive to a distributed perspective. Durrent and Holden (2006) and Murphy et al. (2009) concur with that perspective.

A school’s culture is often implicitly communicated and includes ‘shared norms and values’ (Busher, 2001: 76), givens and beliefs (Torrington and Weightman, 1989), the taken-for-granted assumptions and preconceptions (Fidler, 1998; Busher, 2001). It is ‘the way we do things around here’ (Deal and Kennedy, 1983: 501), the patterns of relationships and forms of association (Hargreaves, 1994). It is the shared patterns of thought, belief, feelings and values resulting from shared experience and common learning (Schein, 1999). It involves passing on and constantly reinforcing shared values and meanings to new group members. It is more permanent than climate or ethos and as such, much more difficult to influence or change. Culture is expressed through how people feel, think and act (MacGilchrist et al., 1995).

Difficult to define, culture is even harder to identify and understand in practice due to its complex and dynamic character, plural and contradictory nature. Being conscious and unconscious (Torrington and Weightman, 1989), culture represents ‘a contest of different voices’ drawn from internal and external cultures, an understanding of both and their interactions being required to progress school improvement (Wrigley, 2003: 35). The construct of an organisation’s culture is key for distributed leadership (Bennett, 2001: 107; 109), consisting of ‘a range of expectations about what are proper and appropriate actions’. Headteachers need to appreciate ‘where the expectations that define legitimate action come from and how they become part of the assumptive worlds of each organisational member’.

Headteachers, also need an appreciation of different types of culture operating within the school to avoid conflict. Corporate culture reflects the values and interpretations of senior managers; organisational culture embraces many subcultures (Tomlinson, 2004) such as departments within a school or peer groups. Youth culture represents a potential obstacle to school improvement and to developing a learning culture (Wrigley, 2003). Regardless of how complex and difficult it might be to understand school culture, those playing a leadership role
require such understanding, to ensure managerial and organisational effectiveness (O’Neill, 1994). Fundamentally, when culture works against a head, it is nearly impossible to get anything done (Deal and Kennedy, 1982).

5.5.4 Understanding of the Complexities of Changing School Culture

Beyond understanding, headteachers need to be skilled at cultural change, embedding and sustaining school improvement (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001). Heads who focus on restructuring rather than reculturing, miss the essence of school improvement (Fullan, 2001). Culture plays a significant influence on ‘readiness for change’ (Stoll, 1999: 511). School improvement without cognisance of culture will have little or no effect (Schmuck and Miles, 1971). Stoll and Fink (1995: 100) go so far as to suggest that culture ‘defines effectiveness’. Everard et al. (2004) attribute long-term impact to culture and teams. Wasserberg (1999: 164) suggests:

*The key factor in turning vision into reality is getting the culture right. This is an endless and complicated process. However, change which does not address the issue of school culture is unlikely to bring lasting success.*

Whilst a school’s culture may be difficult to understand, it is even more difficult to change, requiring permanent changes in peoples’ behaviours (Tomlinson, 2004). Murphy et al. (2009: 190-192) identify school cultural barriers to a distributed perspective: ‘the norm of autonomy at the heart of the culture of schooling’; ‘the norms of privacy and non-interference’; ‘the egalitarian norm’; ‘the norm of civility’; ‘the norm of legitimacy and the norm of division between management and teaching’. Fidler (1998: 506) advocates a shared but pluralistic culture: ‘a common language with different dialects is fine but different languages are not’. That view might be pragmatic since close relationships are not in themselves ends (Fullan, 2001: 67-68):

*Collaborative cultures, which by definition have close relationships, are indeed powerful, but unless they are focusing on the right things they may end up being powerfully wrong.*

Storey (2004: 253) recognises that whilst ‘there may be some intuitive, values-based and practical appeal in the idea of distributed leadership’, a distributed perspective competes with the dominant top-down cultural model. Ignoring such social positioning ‘simply confirms the status quo, or rather, the direction of change imposed by the most powerful’ (Wrigley, 2003: 95). Despite what school leaders
express they value, their words and actions can contradict. Consistency underpins authentic communication since, ‘When staff members hear the call for transformation from a leader whose personal actions remain unchanged, their hope turns to cynicism’ (Reeves, 2007: 94). Faced with a range of issues (Bell, 2007: 153; 155) including ‘resources, staffing and… inability to predict the future’, heads can adopt ‘a reactive and responsive stance rather than a proactive, anticipatory’ approach. This perhaps explains the inconsistency between the words and actions of headteachers (Reeves, 2007), the difference between the planned and lived reality (Spillane and Coldren, 2011).

5.6 What benefits and/or problems arise from operating a distributed perspective on leadership in practice?

Although an assumption that distributed leadership is automatically a good thing is frequently implied (Mascall et al., 2009), Harris and Spillane (2008: 33) caution, ‘it depends. …it is the nature and quality of leadership practice that matters’. Distributed leadership does not necessarily result in organisational improvement: ‘Much depends on the way in which leadership is distributed, how it is distributed and for what purpose’ (Harris et al., 2007: 345). A review of the literature would suggest that there are both potential benefits and problems arising from operating a distributed perspective on leadership in practice.

5.6.1 Potential Benefits Arising from a Distributed Perspective

Regardless of its extensive promotion in contemporary discourse, the literature ‘has not seriously addressed the potential consequences nor the benefits of distributed leadership’ (Camburn and Han, 2009: 25). Empirical data on how successfully leadership is distributed in schools ‘is rare’ (Timperley, 2009: 197). Beyond the effects of distributed leadership through formal organizational school structures, there is ‘no systematic evidence about the relative contribution to the achievement of organizational goals of different patterns of distributed leadership’ (Anderson, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2009c: 223).

Limited evidence exists of the impact of distributed leadership and even less of the impact on pupil learning outcomes (Harris, 2009a; Hartley, 2010; Mascall et al., 2009). Leithwood et al. (2009b: 281) suggest that given the stage of theoretical development, it has only recently become possible to ‘consider questions of impact’. In one of a few studies specifically examining the relationship between leadership
and pupil outcomes, Day et al. (2007b: 17; 2009) identified, ‘substantial leadership distribution was very important to a school’s success in improving pupil outcomes’. Day et al. (2009) also identified a link between distributed leadership and staff morale, which had a consequential effect on pupil behaviour and learning outcomes. Mascall et al. (2009: 81) propose,

The degree to which leadership is successful in improving the learning of students would appear to reflect, in part, the amount of influence leadership has on teachers’ motivations and related beliefs and feelings.

In the absence of a direct link between distributed leadership and pupil outcomes, more indirect effects have been promoted focusing on processes rather than outcomes. Leithwood et al. (2009a: 4) describe four theoretical perspectives making the association between a distributed perspective and organizational effectiveness: ‘organizational learning, distributed cognition, complexity science and high involvement leadership or management’. Drawing on a range of authors, Harris (2009a) identifies a number of aspects claimed to be positively effected by distributed leadership such as organisational change and school improvement, developing leadership capacity, developing and sustaining learning communities, and supporting teachers’ professional growth. Distributed leadership is also asserted as providing the “organisational circuitry” that can support knowledge creation within and between schools… [as] the key to transformation’, ‘by forming communities of practice based on social processes where individuals collaborate and work together’ (Harris, 2009c: 253).

Distributed leadership has been attributed to teachers being more likely ‘to access instructional leaders as resources for their development’ (Camburn and Han, 2009: 43). Dinham’s (2009: 153) study found that distributed leadership was fundamentally important to action learning as well as the success of action learning projects concluding, ‘distributed leadership has the capacity, when aligned with teacher learning, to help foster that elusive phenomenon of the learning community’. Drawing on and quoting Elmore (1996: 20), Bell (2007) advocates empowering collegial management structures within a collaborative culture with motivated teachers, an emphasis on professional development focused on pupil experience. Leithwood et al. (2009c: 235) suggest distributed leadership is more likely to thrive in ‘flatter organizational structures… structures which provide opportunities for
collaboration among colleagues... and norms which sustain collegial relationships among school staff”.

5.6.2 Potential Problems Arising from a Distributed Perspective

Having reviewed the empirical evidence available, Leithwood et al. (2009a: 3) conclude that, perhaps due to lack of clarity of purpose, vision, direction and coordinated action, ‘the consequences of distributed leadership is not all positive’. Although supportive of the principles behind a distributed perspective, Duignan (2008) sounds a caution, questioning the way in which distributed leadership is often promoted and supported unquestionably and uncritically, arguing that perversely in both theory and practice, control-oriented approaches to leadership might instead be perpetuated, mitigating against building breadth and depth in school leadership. Moreover, Fitzgerald and Gunter (2006: 44) argue that distributed leadership could become no more than a means to facilitate ‘new forms of managerialism that deliver organisational efficiencies and effectiveness’. Distributed leadership ‘cannot be considered as politically neutral’ (Bolden, 2011: 260). Harris (2008: 156) advocates maintaining the focus on ‘a positive influence on learning’ to guard against such dangers.

The National College of School Leadership (2004: 3.1 p2) emphasise that distributed leadership should not be considered a panacea for effective leadership: ‘The risks of distributing leadership are anarchy and confusion’. Timperley (2009: 220) contends: ‘distributing leadership over more people is a risky business and may result in the greater distribution of incompetence’. This may in part be due to the required crossing of established structural and cultural boundaries (Harris et al., 2007) to ‘create deep expertise inside the organisation and to secure the constant renewal of learning’ (Harris, 2005: 22). Managing multiple boundaries through ‘monitoring the innovation’ is key (Mayrowetz et al., 2009: 179). In so doing, coherence to school improvement initiatives can be insured. However, ‘Effective boundary spanning and coherence… can be very fragile’ (Timperley, 2009: 213). Almost inevitably, crossing boundaries creates tensions.

We live in an age of accountability, artificially supplanting responsibility (Hargreaves, 2008). Multiple and often conflicting accountabilities can caution heads to be wary of distributing leadership and with that, power and control. Performance management
plays a key role in ensuring dispersed accountability is addressed, leading to inherent contradictions (Bell, 2007: 98) and a breeding ground for suspicion and mistrust. For some staff, taking on a leadership role is akin to assuming management responsibility, a short step to increased workload and accountability. Although the middle leader role has been identified as key (Leithwood et al., 2006) in boundary spanning (Timperley, 2009) there can be an assumption that middle leaders lead, which is not always born out in reality (Jarvis, 2008: 29). Positioning the role ‘in the “middle” of a hierarchy’ can lead to ‘managerialism that privileges structure, hierarchy and organisational purpose’ (Fitzgerald and Gunter, 2006: 44). Middle leaders can experience specific difficulties. Their involvement in a strategic leadership role requires significant alteration in power relationships, far from straightforward since ‘the relationship between middle leaders … and their followers remains elusive’ (Jarvis, 2008: 24). That challenge is perhaps compounded when middle leaders are expected to make ‘judgements about the performance of their colleagues’ (Bell, 2007: 76). Time, along with resourcing and status are among the factors impacting on middle leaders’ ability to perform their role effectively (Bell, 2007: 82; Fitzgerald et al., 2006; NCSL, 2004; Thomson; 2007):

- openness
- trust
- a clearly articulated set of aims
- a willingness to give and receive advice
- and an organisational structure that allows, supports and encourages the necessary professional interchanges.

Harris (2007) identifies tensions that can become barriers to distributed leadership related to: conflicting priorities; boundary spanning; responsibility versus authority; and individual versus collective performance. Harris (2009a: 13) also identifies a number of adverse consequences of distributed leadership such as ‘conflicting priorities, targets and timescales’ as well as a negative effect on team outcomes related to inefficiencies, lack of role clarity and reduced esteem from having too many leaders. Removing structural and cultural barriers to distributed leadership is key, ensuring it has greater impact on organisational development (Harris, 2009a).

### 5.7 Conclusion

Within the literature, many use the term ‘distributed leadership’ loosely. A common view or singular definition is lacking (Duignan, 2008; Harris and Spillane, 2008). For the purpose of this study, the working definition ascribed to is that offered by Harris and Spillane (2008: 31), heavily influenced by the work of Gronn, who use the term ‘distributed leadership perspective’ whereby multiple leaders, formally recognized or
not, engage in a wide range of leadership activities. This perspective focuses on the interactions in leadership practice and the influence of leadership practice on school improvement.

Distributed leadership suffers from conceptual confusion. Having originally derived its understandings of management and subsequently of leadership from the field of management and business, the field of education is now paving the way for understanding distributed leadership. Within the educational leadership literature, although much has been published, relatively little is based on the analysis of data generated in schools (Harris et al., 2007). Instead, much of the literature is ‘normatively-oriented’, conveying ‘enthusiastic optimism about its anticipated benefits’ (Leithwood et al., 2009a: 2). A much smaller amount is descriptive or analytical. Few studies have been conducted which enable headteachers to speak for themselves to gather a real understanding of views and perspectives. It is arguable how much of the literature is ‘prurient or puffed’ (Pascal and Ribbins, 1998: 4). There are clear exceptions to this but existing studies, by their very nature, tend to be small-scale.

This PhD study focuses on empirically based research, providing a small number of primary headteachers a substantial voice in the findings, extending beyond self-reporting to elicit the perceptions of staff in their schools. In seeking a better understanding of the headteacher’s role within a distributed perspective along with insights into what a distributed perspective looks like in practice within those schools, problems arising within that perspective were identified. This marks a clear departure from much of the research within the field to date, as does the design of the research methods discussed later. As such, this study makes a contribution to existing knowledge since, ‘We undoubtedly need empirical studies that highlight both the inadequacies of distributed leadership practice, as well as the possibilities’ (Harris, 2009a: 19).

Within a distributed perspective, little is yet known about ‘the interplay between the formal and informal leadership structures and processes’, the ‘relationship between principal and teacher leadership’ or ‘the formal and informal leadership interdependencies and interconnections’ (Harris, 2009b: 242). There is a growing debate about the conception of leadership and its distributed perspective. However,
whilst traditional school structures remain, it may be that ‘The “heterarchy” of distributed leadership resides uneasily within the formal bureaucracy of schools’ (Hartley, 2010: 282). More empirical studies are needed (Harris et al., 2007: 345): ‘Without this evidence, we might as well start looking for the next leadership theory’.

This study set out to explore a distributed perspective through the experience of headteachers committed to its practice, informed by feedback on the lived reality of staff in their schools. As it progressed, the fundamental importance of teacher leadership within a distributed perspective emerged since headteachers ‘occupy the critical space in the teacher leadership equation’ and ‘teacher leadership is not a chance event’ (Murphy et al., 2009: 181; 193). The next chapter focuses on teacher leadership, to explore why that might be the case.
Chapter Six: Literature Review - Part 4
Teacher Leadership

6.1 Introduction
As identified in the previous chapter, a distinct yet integral aspect of the distributed leadership paradigm is teacher leadership (Harris, 2003b; 2004b). Although logical, the distinctiveness of teacher leadership and its complex interplays with distributed leadership only surfaced explicitly during the first case study. At that stage, the literature was returned to and a separate yet wholly connected review of the literature conducted. Throughout the data analysis stages, the relationship between teachers and support staff, and the implications for school leadership surfaced as a recurring theme. Again, the literature was returned to, to inform emerging understandings.

In the previous two chapters, the development of the terms school leadership and distributed leadership was traced, problematising each paradigm, highlighting limitations in the theory associated with each. In this section, the development of the term teacher leadership is traced first by focusing on the rise of teacher leadership as a discrete term before exploring the literature around teacher leadership as a distinct form of school leadership and inherent difficulties with that positioning. Inherent tensions with assigning the role of leader to the teacher post and inherent difficulties with that positioning are explored, before discussing issues with assuming that leadership is a natural part of a teacher’s role and whether pre-service-training is sufficient to equip teachers for a leadership role. Related to that, the relationship between teachers and support staff is problematised. Finally, the inter-dependent headteacher-teacher-leadership relationship is discussed. Key limitations in the teacher leadership theory pertaining to this study are explored throughout. In the conclusion, significant themes emerging from a review of the literature are returned to, identifying the implications for this study.

The subsequent chapter sets out the research methodology and design, devised to answer the five research questions arising from the review of the literature.

6.2 The Rise of Teacher Leadership
Within the international literature, leadership is currently receiving a good deal of attention (Leithwood and Day, 2008; Mulford, 2007). This is hardly surprising when
leadership has been placed ‘second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning’ (NCSL, 2006; NCSL, 2007: 4). Indeed, Leithwood et al. (2006: 5) conclude through a review of the international evidence,

*leadership has very significant effects on the quality of school organisation and on pupil learning. … leadership serves as a catalyst for unleashing the potential capacities that already exist in the organisation.*

As previously discussed, until recently, leadership was ascribed to headteacher and senior management post holders, teaching was ascribed to teachers. Teacher leadership roles were limited to classrooms as were teachers’ field of authority and influence (Barth, 1988). Schools as organisations were hierarchically structured around formal management (and leadership) roles. The headteacher was charged with taking forward school improvement directives, resulting in the traditional roles of headteacher leader and teacher follower (Crowther, 1997; Murphy, 2005b).

More recently, however, having recognised the limitations of the heroic, charismatic individual leader previously discussed, a distributed perspective on leadership developed within which, the role of teachers in both formal and informal positions was promoted. The argument developed that, although the impact on pupil outcomes of headteachers’ leadership is powerful, it is indirect and mediated through the exercise of teacher leadership (Harris and Muijs, 2003; Leithwood et al., 1996). In order to sustain improvement, leadership needs to be located in the many, not the few, and located close to the classroom, focused on pedagogy impacting on learning (Harris and Muijs, 2003). The leadership roles are distinct and complementary (Crowther et al., 2009: 129; 66), requiring power sharing through ‘trust, integrity, and goodwill… mutual respect and regard, a sense of shared purpose, and allowance for individual expression’. The teacher micro leadership role focuses on pedagogy arising from the overall school improvement process, while the headteacher macro leadership role focuses on strategic development. Respect for that interdependent relationship enables ‘*the deep secrets of the black box [to] be discerned*’.

This change in perspective is illustrated though the shift from the Level 5 illustration for ‘leadership’ of the previous version of ‘How good is our school?’ (HGIOS) (HMIE, 2005) when the importance of the headteacher’s role was highlighted as the focus (having clear strategic vision, promoting best practice identified in the school, initiating and managing change, and putting pupils’ learning and achievement at the
centre of management and improvement activities) to the most recent version of HGIOS (HMIE, 2007a) with a shift for ensuring high-quality learning and teaching from resting almost exclusively with the headteacher to responsibility distributed across school leadership more generally. The classroom teacher is now looked upon as a leader of learning. This endorsement of distributed leadership becomes yet one more role for the headteacher to manage.

Far from being a new concept, teacher leadership has featured in the literature and policy landscape for decades. Compared with the volume of literature on headteacher leadership, much less is available on teacher leadership (MacBeath, 2004). Murphy (2005b) completed a comprehensive review of the literature available and is referred to extensively in this chapter.

The purpose behind the teacher leadership focus has varied considerably passing through phases of efforts to re-culture schools, raise standards, introduce standardisation and more recently, enhance student achievement (Hargreaves, 2009). It has been used to control teachers and their teaching (Blasé and Blasé, 1999), develop teachers’ human agency (Frost and Harris, 2003) and democratise schools (Gehrke, 1991). More recently, the emphasis has been on engaging teachers in the process of transforming schools, developing the school’s capacity to improve with a focus on teaching and learning (Crowther, 2009), tapping into an underutilised, ‘sleeping giant’ resource (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001: 2) through responsibility, mutual accountability and collaboration (Frost and Durrant, 2002). Teacher leadership, ‘shares multiple properties with other professionally focused reform models such as school-based decision making’ (Murphy, 2005b: 63).

Teacher leadership features in educational and workforce reform designed to ‘professionalize teaching’ (Smylie, 1995: 3), up-skill teachers (Murphy, 2005b), engage teachers in school improvement initiatives, build schools as learning communities whilst arguably supporting democracy (and emphasising community and justice – Murphy, 2002) or increasing control over teachers (Murphy, 2005b) depending on which lens is in view.

Pre 1985, teacher leadership was a theme absent from the mainstream literature (Lynch and Strodol, 1991). Throughout the 1980s and much of the 1990s, teacher leadership was defined through role-based models, set within the hierarchical
structures of schools, assigning teachers to formal leadership roles within vertical career ladders, recognising increased responsibility with increased remuneration, designed primarily to make for efficient systems, with an emphasis on management responsibilities and administrative tasks (Murphy, 2005b).

Since then, with attempts to change schools as organisations, creating flatter hierarchies and re-culturing the profession to take on a range of roles and responsibilities, understandings of school leadership developed featuring ‘participatory governance’ and collegiality (Murphy, 2005b: 18, vii, 27 and 41). The central importance of ‘instructionally focused leadership and the importance of transformationally anchored leadership work’ was acknowledged through:

\[
\text{a reorientation in transformed schools from bureaucratic to moral authority and from bureaucratic control to professional empowerment [as well as] an orientation toward accountability through ‘professionalization’ and ‘power distribution’}.
\]

All this was in pursuit of better student outcomes, since formal role-based teacher leadership had not delivered the school effectiveness agenda (Smylie et al., 2002). In recent years, leadership has been framed in different terms (Murphy, 2005b: 8), as: ‘(1) an organizational property, (2) a function or process, (3) an out-growth of expertise, (4) an activity of a group, and (5) a dynamic of community’. The teacher leadership role emerges through their actions rather than through ascribed formal hierarchical roles, through ‘a “stance”, a mind-set, a way of being, acting, and thinking as a learner within a community of learners’ (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995: 95; Hargreaves, 2009) with shared accountability.

6.3 Teacher Leadership as a Distinctive form of School Leadership and Inherent Difficulties with that Positioning

Crowther et al. (2009: 22) propose five premises for the promotion of teacher leadership, that it is: real and a concept in its own right; grounded in respected theory; integral to ‘pedagogical excellence’; ‘versatile and adaptive’; dependent on strong headteachers and ‘supportive systemic frameworks’. These themes are returned to below. Teacher leadership is premised to: professionalize teaching through empowerment/ownership, commitment/efficiency/satisfaction and the development of teaching as a professional career; strengthen school organization through developing a learning community (collegiality, professional learning, internal accountability) together with improved organisational processes; promote class and
school improvement through classroom teaching and student learning (Murphy, 2005b: 50-63). That said, teacher leadership is complex and ‘outside the classroom has rather shallow roots’ (Murphy, 2005b: 10). Furthermore, ‘the construct of teacher leadership has not yet been subjected to research interrogation’ (Crowther et al., 2009: 39). Indeed, there is little and mixed evidence to date that teacher leadership supports school level improvement (Little, 1988; Murphy, 2005b; Smylie et al., 2002). Moreover, potential negative consequences of teacher leadership have been identified (Little, 1987; Smylie, 1997).

Two separate literature reviews are helpful here. Murphy (2005b: 29) concludes that redefining leadership stems from conceptions of distribution within which leadership is perceived as present throughout organisations and not residing within specific roles and positions. Muijs and Harris (2003: 439 and 440) acknowledge that in common with distributed leadership, teacher leadership’s central concern is empowerment and agency and as such,

*the literature and associated empirical work on teacher leadership provides an important starting point in understanding and illuminating how distributed leadership works in schools.*

In positioning teacher leadership as a distinct form of school leadership, reaching consensus on an agreed definition has proved problematic (Wasley, 1991). Definitions overlap and compete, leading to conceptual confusion (Muijs and Harris, 2003). Murphy (2005b: 12-14) highlights thirteen different definitions, drawing on Yarger and Lee (1994) to conclude that those definitions identify specific key components of teacher leadership, referring to Crowther et al. (2002: xvii) for a preferred definition:

*Teacher leadership is about action that transforms teaching and learning in a school, that ties school and community together on behalf of learning, and that advances social sustainability and quality of life for a community.*

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) distinguish teacher leadership from other forms of school leadership through three main components: the leadership of pupils or other teachers; the leadership of operational tasks; leadership through decision-making or collaboration. Murphy (2005b: 67-67) identified eight principles of teacher leadership: grounded in classrooms; prefaced by effective teaching; collaborative; anchored in community (non-hierarchical, non-bureaucratic); service orientated; co-constructed with colleagues; context dependent; potentially making a difference.
Whether informally focused at classroom level or formally focused with wider school responsibility (Muijs and Harris, 2003), two recurring themes emerge from a number of teacher leadership definitions (York-Barr and Duke, 2004; Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001; Miller et al., 2000; Crowther et al., 2009): influence and pedagogic focus. Teacher leadership is perceived as a means through which democracy can be nurtured through community development (Barth, 2001), positively affecting school-wide teaching and learning through developing teacher agency (Harris and Muijs, 2004; Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001) and advocacy (Crowther et al., 2009). Teacher leadership is perceived as potentially contributing to school improvement beyond the efforts of individuals or their classroom (Crowther et al., 2009), exercising influence greater than the sum of the individuals involved (Smyllie et al., 2002). Empowering teachers, enhancing their self-esteem and work satisfaction, increases motivation, performance and potentially higher retention levels (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001).

It must be recognised that teacher leadership is, ‘a theory in action’ (Murphy, 2005b: 46). Limited and mixed empirical evidence exists of the actual effects of either formal or informal teacher leadership (Leithwood and Jantzi, 1998; Leithwood, 2003). Through a review of the literature, Muijs and Harris (2003) assert that collaboration between teachers has consistently been found to enhance school effectiveness. Harris (2003a) identified four dimensions characterising teacher leadership leading to improvement in schools: brokering, translating school improvement principles into practice; participating, leading to empowerment and ownership; mediating, ensuring all sources of expertise are harnessed; positive relationships, leading to shared learning and development. Teacher leadership is focused on other teachers, development tasks and pedagogy (Harris and Muijs, 2004).

Proponents would argue that teacher leadership is fundamentally an ethical position, promoting democratic values and teacher empowerment (Crowther et al., 2009). It can equally be used to control the efforts of teachers, within contrived collegiality (Hargreaves, 1994 and 2003). As with any other type of leadership, teacher leadership can be good, bad or indifferent (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006). Indeed, ‘teachers could end up losing much more that they gain in this “exchange”’, if teacher leadership becomes, ‘a type of Trojan horse that allows certain reformers
to take over from the inside what they have consistently failed to achieve by direct assaults’ (Murphy, 2005b: 160-61). Teacher unions have been understandably cautious in embracing teacher leadership, promoting it as distinct from management functions, responsibilities and associated workload. In so doing, teacher agency and democratic principles can be pursued by teachers without commitment to additional responsibilities. The EIS (2010: 17) position on this has recently been clarified and articulated in alignment with contemporary literature and rhetoric:

*The model which the EIS would embrace is one which recognises leadership potential in most – arguably all – teachers, in other words well beyond those who are in titular management posts.*

However, as will be explored next, this position is itself problematic.

### 6.4 Assigning the Role of Leader to the Teacher Post and Inherent Difficulties with that Positioning

Although there is a populist view that all teachers are capable of taking up a leadership role within their schools (Harris and Muijs, 2004), others would disagree that all teachers have that ability. Leadership is ‘the process of being perceived as a leader’ (Lord and Maher, 1993: 11), requiring others to position themselves in the role of follower, giving consent to be led (Greenfield, 1995; Lord and Maher, 1993). One of the fundamental prerequisites of a teacher’s ability to influence others is for them to be perceived as an effective practitioner (Burton and Brundrett, 2005; Muijs and Harris, 2003; Harris and Muijs, 2004; Murphy, 2005b). Additionally, they need to be perceived as having ‘a level of expertise’ and to have competence in teaching adults as well as children (Gehrke, 1991: 2). Moreover, teacher leaders need to be motivated to continuously seek ways to innovate and improve ensuring pupils achieve their best (Wilmore, 2007) through influencing others towards improved educational practice (Harris and Muijs, 2004).

Another problem with the positioning of teacher leadership is that not all teachers wish or seek a leadership role (MacBeath, 2004, Tomlinson, 2004). They may reject the invitation to lead through reluctance to participate in the process (Gunter, 2003) or reluctance to assume responsibility (Martin, 2002). Crowther *et al.* (2009: 97, 10, 17, 42 and 97) aver: ‘on average, 10-30 percent of teachers at any one time have the personal interest and professional skills to explore and develop teacher leadership capabilities’. Furthermore, that ‘It is unrealistic to assume that all teachers have the energy, confidence, or experience to engage influentially at all
points in their work lives’. Teacher leaders require ‘conviction, courage and strategic skill’. A teacher’s ability to lead is influenced by ‘context, power relations, personal characteristics, individual circumstances, and human nature’ as well as the level of headteacher support, how appealing a specific school development initiative is and ‘the availability of highly credible external consultancy assistance and critique’.

A number of school context barriers to teacher leadership have been identified (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001) including top-down management structures, lack of support, and lack of a collaborative culture with negative reactions from colleagues (Murphy, 2005b). Context and culture can facilitate or stifle (Snell and Swanson, 2000). So too can relationships between teachers, since teacher leaders encounter professional norms (Barth, 2001: 445; Murphy et al., 2009; Smylie, 1992) making it ‘difficult for teachers in many schools to accept or display leadership’. The norms within each school have a greater influence than those of the teaching profession at large (Smylie, 1997). Murphy (2005b: 121-127) identifies two sets of norms in relation to teacher leadership relating closely to the norms discussed in the previous chapter, which Murphy et al. (2009: 190-192) identified in relation to developing a school culture conducive to a distributed perspective:

1. Norms related to teaching and learning: ‘legitimacy’ or ‘what counts as appropriate work for teachers’; ‘the divide between teaching and administration’; ‘managerial prerogative’ along with ‘followership’ and ‘compliance’; and

2. Norms related to the nature of work: ‘autonomy’ leading to teachers who ‘do not wish to lead or be led’; ‘privacy’ leading to ‘noninterference’; ‘egalitarian[ism]’ potentially leading to peer rejection; ‘civility’; ‘conservatism and aversion to risk taking’.

Two key paradoxes surface in the distributed leadership paradigm. The first relates to organisation structure, which if used carefully, enables rather than stifles, providing legitimacy for teacher leadership (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001). Linked to that, if additional remuneration is provided which authors such as Harris and Muijs (2003) argue is essential to compensate teachers (for the inevitable additional time and energy required), a two-tier system results (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001) hardly conducive to building a learning community. The second paradox is that, although the reality may be that not all teachers are capable of leadership, if
teacher leadership is not viewed as the locus of all and if associated opportunities are not made available to all, then some teachers could become leaders, seeing others relegated to technicians, again creating a two-tier system. Furthermore, coercing teachers into assuming leadership roles is contrary to the dispositions required for the role. Such positioning is explored next in further detail.

6.5 Inherent Tensions in Assuming that Leadership is a Natural Part of a Teacher’s Role and Pre-service Training

Despite the challenges incumbent with the role, a change appears to be occurring within the teaching profession. Increased numbers of teachers are seeking leadership opportunities within their schools not for promotion or enhancement but as part of their commitment to the school and its community, looking to positively affect the experiences, opportunities and outcomes for pupils, whilst developing their own professional role (Wilmore, 2007). Such teachers recognise teacher leadership as an integral part of their role (Hatfield, 1989: 13), an ‘extension of role not a different role’. Burton and Brundrett (2005: 28) propose:

"By being more aware of the [classroom practice] skills that have been developed and how they have parallels in school management, the transition to a post of responsibility within the school can be made more confidently and successfully."

However, where teacher and teacher leader roles differ, is in the teacher leader’s focus on ‘helping teacher colleagues’ particularly through role modelling, and ‘facilitating school improvement’ more specifically through ‘administrative tasks, staff development activities, and curriculum and instructional functions’ (Murphy, 2005b: 77-78). The acquisition of such skills requires training, support and professional development opportunities both formal and informal in nature, theory building embedded in individual school contexts, with a clear purpose, within professional learning communities which foster collaboration, ‘shared ownership and collective responsibility’ (Murphy, 2005b: 149). Such a change in professional identity and role definition is not a given. It depends in large part on school context and opportunities therein (Conley, 1997; Lieberman, 1987). Drawing on a range of literature, Murphy (2005b: 49) contends that coordinated efforts, broad-based systems shaping the activities of multiple actors and leaders whose expertise is recognised by their peers, are all factors at play. So too is the facilitative role of formal leaders.
Snell and Swanson (2000: 10) assert: ‘Exemplary teaching is the foundation of teacher leadership’. So too are ‘knowledge, skills and attitudes’ (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001: 13). Devaney (1987) identifies six roles which teacher leaders need to develop: on-going development in their own teaching; organising and leading peer review of school practice; providing curriculum development knowledge; participating in school-level decision-making; leading CPD and supporting colleagues’ CPD; participating in peer PRD. From the literature, whilst recognising that each teacher leader is as unique as their school context, Murphy (2005b: 153) identifies three groups of knowledge and skills (‘understanding and navigating the school organisation, working productively with others, and building a collaborative enterprise’) together with a range of attitudes teacher leaders require to develop: personal and professional motivation; teaching expertise within a wider overview of education providing legitimised authority and influence; personal qualities, hard work and commitment; four overall accomplished skill areas drawn upon as required (articulation of vision; interpersonal skills; collaboration skills; management or administration skills). Pellicer and Anderson (1995) identify the additional key skills of a teacher leader in assisting other teachers to plan teaching and learning, make curricular decisions, improve their teaching and engage in peer coaching.

There is a clear distinction made between the administrative role of teacher leadership and the formal leadership role of school management and administration. However, such distinction is simplistic as there is much within the classroom context needing to be managed in relation to pupil ability, pupil needs and the people tasked with supporting the educational experience of pupils (Calder and Grieve, 2004).

As discussed in Carroll and Torrance (in press), Annex E of TP21 (SEED, 2001) arising from the 2000 national review of teachers’ terms and conditions of employment identified a list of activities not normally to be undertaken by teachers but to be undertaken by support staff. The main purpose behind the increased deployment of support staff was to free up teachers’ time to teach with associated clear expectations placed on the teacher’s role. Teachers were charged with the organisation, supervision and on-going mentoring of classroom support staff. There was a presumption that such a move would be welcomed and unproblematic, without recognition given to the time, skills and personal aptitudes required for working with adults in the management of classroom support. Training for such responsibility did not form part of initial teacher
education (Calder and Grieve, 2004) and the majority of teachers in service received no such training (Blatchford et al., 2009; Mistry et al., 2004). Experienced teachers previously accustomed to high levels of autonomy, had to adjust to the demands of team-working. Staff were largely left to form new understandings of working cooperatively and collaboratively, the support staff role being context specific (Mistry et al., 2004). The number of teachers (each with their own expectations and ways of working) that support staff were often required to work with, could exacerbate a lack of role clarity (Wilson, Schlapp and Davidson, 2003).

The array of support staff remits presents challenges for managing associated roles and responsibilities, in the absence of consideration for the distinct mentoring needs of support staff (Burgess and Mayes, 2007). Furthermore, potential confusion and conflict (Calder and Grieve, 2004) arises from the blurring of the middle ground between the prescribed duties of increasingly skilled support staff and teachers. The support staff role has become increasingly complex without the conveyance of status and authority required for its effective execution (Stead et al., 2007). Special needs auxiliaries and behaviour support assistants tend to be regarded by teachers as having higher status and utility than classroom assistants (Stead et al., 2007). Line management arrangements for support staff are often not clearly identified or performed (Mistry et al., 2004), adding to tensions in relationships with teaching staff. Classroom management falls under the jurisdiction of the teacher. Formal line management however, usually resides with one or more other staff (such as the school’s business manager, a learning support teacher, an additional support needs coordinator) possibly not be based within the school.

Although the teacher leadership role is regarded as distinct from formal leadership and management roles within schools, it goes beyond the traditional view of a teacher’s role. In that regard, it would appear to be at least in part dependent on the headteacher role and on mutually supportive relationships (Durrant and Holden, 2006) as explored next.

6.6 The Inter-Dependent Headteacher-Teacher-Leadership Relationship

In order for teacher leadership to thrive, teachers need to be empowered and encouraged to become leaders, provided with time and opportunity to collaborate with colleagues (Harris and Muijs, 2004) including their headteacher (Suranna and
Moss, 2002), and with time to undertake the role, particularly in relation to administrative activities. Having reviewed the literature, Murphy (2005b: 105) identified six broad dimensions for supporting teacher leadership: values and expectations, structures, training, resources, incentives and recognition, and role clarity. Hayes et al. (2004: 524) identified key characteristics of ‘productive leadership’ including: a commitment to leadership dispersal; supportive social relationships; practice based knowledge, translating theory into strategic action, aligned with community concerns and relationships; a focus on pedagogy, improving learning outcomes and organisational learning; support for developing a caring culture, encouraging professional risk taking; and a focus on organizational processes, structures and strategies, facilitating the smooth running of the school.

Teacher leadership does not happen by chance (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001; Killion, 1996; Slater, 2008). In that regard, the ‘paradox of teacher leadership’ is that it is dependent on strong, supportive headteachers (Barth, 2001; Blegen and Kennedy, 2000; Slater, 2008; Smylie et al., 2002: 182), themselves capable leaders (Barth, 2001; Smylie et al., 2002) promoting a collegial model through facilitating participatory processes (Burton and Brundrett, 2005; Bush, 2003a; Murphy et al., 2009), identifying teacher leaders (Murphy, 2005b). Indeed, ‘the principal, it seems, has a disproportionate influence upon teacher leadership – for better or for worse’ (Barth, 2001: 447). Such headteachers: craft a vision (Senge, 2006) to provide direction as well as set expectations and legitimize the role (Murphy, 2005b); foster supportive organisational environments; identify and help to address any barriers to teacher leadership (Crowther et al., 2009); facilitate leadership development opportunities (Buckner and McDowelle, 2000; Crowther et al., 2009; Olivier and Hipp, 2006); develop a leadership ‘skill set’ (Murphy, 2005b: ix); create systems (Childs-Bowen et al., 2000) and opportunities for teacher collaboration (Newmann and Wehlage, 1995); support (Moller and Pankake, 2006), with a focus on teaching and learning, modelling good practice (Crowther et al., 2009).

That is not to say that teachers cannot and do not lead without such supportive headteachers rather, that in order for teacher leaders to thrive (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001) and for their efforts to have a sustained positive impact on their schools and communities (Crowther et al., 2009), such support within an interdependent relationship is required. Furthermore, in taking on leadership roles,
teachers have expectations of their headteachers which, if not met, can result in staff feeling undervalued, under-supported and demoralised (Gold, 2004).

It follows that if the role of the headteacher is of such fundamental importance to teacher leadership and therefore to distributed leadership, headteachers will need to re-conceptualise school leadership (Murphy et al., 2009). In so doing, headteachers have an opportunity to view their own role differently and exercise their influence differently (Fullan, 2004), to support rather than control (Bolin, 1989), to become leaders of leaders (Ash and Persall, 2000), helping ‘to define and breathe life into these new forms of governance, organization, and leadership’, focusing more on ‘the pedagogic dimensions’ (Murphy, 2005b: 34 and 36) as head learners (Barth, 1986 and 1988) and community leaders. They will also need to know, ‘how to develop, support, and manage these new forms of leadership’ (Smylie et al., 2002: 182). They will need to know how to promote teacher leadership (Murphy 2005b: 141-42):

- crafting a vision and delineating expectations for teacher leadership in the school, identifying and selecting teacher leaders and linking them to leadership opportunities, legitimizing the work of teacher leaders, providing direct support, developing the leadership skill set of teacher leaders, and managing the teacher leadership process at the school level.

Murphy (2005b: 34) avers, ‘The work will be neither easy nor comfortable’. In the conclusions chapter, I will identify key considerations arising from this study.

6.7 Conclusion

As the teacher role comes under national review again (Donaldson, 2010; McCormac, 2011) it seems opportune to reflect on where leadership sits within that role (Carroll and Torrance, 2011). A clearer understanding of the nature of teacher leadership would be helpful. Linked to that, a more sophisticated understanding of the classroom management of support staff would seem appropriate, with an appreciation of their complex role and the implications for school practice.

Little research has been conducted into the experiences and perceptions of teaching and support staff working co-dependently. Less has been conducted into teachers’ perceptions of their role in relation to developing the leadership capacity of support staff. Less still has been conducted into support staffs’ experience of different expectations of the various facets of their role, as they move between the semi-
private spaces of the classroom and the public spaces of the school. This, despite the increasingly complex nature of the support staff role, and the expectation that support staff will take on lead roles within the public spaces of the school.

In 2009, to my knowledge and to the knowledge of J. Spillane and T. Townsend (personal conversation, July 28, 2009) and others (C. Day, P. Gronn, H. Gunter, A. Harris, K. Leithwood, V. Robinson, H. Timperley - personal communications, September 2009), no published studies existed focussing on the experiences and perceptions of headteachers taking forward a distributed perspective on leadership and management. Gronn (personal communication, September 2009) was able to identify one such study by Murphy et al. (2009). This is perhaps especially surprising if as Crowther et al. (2009: 140) argue:

*Teacher leadership is a particular form of school leadership different from, yet highly dependent on, metastrategic principal leadership. For it to exist at all, moderate encouragement and support from administrators is required. For it to thrive, substantial encouragement and support are often necessary.*

If headteachers are to play such a fundamentally important role, it is time such studies were conducted. Developing teacher leadership as a key component of distributed leadership is fraught with potential tensions and yet we still know little about how best to support it (O’Brien et al., 2003). Case studies are needed into *how teacher leadership can best be facilitated and developed* (Harris and Muijs, 2003: 12).

This study contributes to developing such understandings. The research questions arose from a review of the literature. The approaches and methods were selected and designed in order to best address those questions. The chapter which follows sets out the research methodology and design, exploring the experiences and perceptions of three primary headteachers taking a distributed perspective on leadership. Related to that, the methods enabled the exploration of the characteristics of distributed leadership as identified by the headteacher and staff, along with the extent to which leadership was distributed ('lived' performance and ‘designed’ organisation in tandem, Spillane and Coldren, 2011), and the identification of facilitators and inhibitors to nurturing teacher leadership.
Chapter Seven: Methodology and Research Design

7.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters identified a range of conceptual confusions inherent in the theoretical frame within which distributed leadership is located. The literature review traced the policy context and genealogy of the field, identifying the origins of and construction behind the positioning of school leadership, distributed leadership and teacher leadership. The meanings, intentions and practice of distributed leadership were explored. So too was the problematic nature of the theory of distributed leadership with its limited empirical underpinning.

This study into distributed leadership comprised small-scale empirical research using interpretative enquiry with aspects of a grounded approach to reach a depth of understanding, with a focus on three headteacher case studies. The focus for the research conducted was to elicit the experiences and perceptions of fairly recently appointed primary headteacher SQH graduates, employed by the same local authority, articulating a commitment to taking forward a distributed perspective on leadership and management. Those headteachers had a voice through a sequence of four in-depth, semi-structured interviews, one of which adopted a narrative style. In addition, the headteachers were each asked to keep a reflective diary, for a four-week duration. The study extended beyond self-reporting as staff perceptions of school leadership and management were also elicited through a 360° analysis, a semi-structured questionnaire exploring the extent to which leadership was distributed within each school. That 360° questionnaire incorporated a sociometric analysis of the leadership relationships within the school.

Through the gathering and analysis of data using the methods outlined above and discussed at greater depth within this chapter, the intention was to reach a depth of understanding in relation to the first five research questions arising from a review of the literature as previously explored, namely:

- What do primary headteachers understand as distributed leadership?
- What do primary headteachers identify as the key characteristics of distributed leadership if they believe it to be embedded in the practice of their particular schools?
- To what extent in the opinion of staff do those characteristics currently
operate in their particular schools?

- How do those primary headteachers think those characteristics have come about? (e.g. naturally and/or purposely planned for)
- What do primary headteachers (and their staff) perceive as the benefits and/or problems arising from operating a distributed perspective in practice?

In this chapter both the methodology (the overall research and analysis approach with its theoretical underpinning and adopted paradigm) and the methods (the means through which data was collected and analysed) are discussed (Brewer, 2007). The methodological foundations of the study are explored including the underlying ontological and epistemological (Silverman, 2005; Burton et al., 2008; Cohen et al., 2006; McKenzie, 1997) assumptions made. The researcher’s view of human nature and the relationship between human beings and their environment – determinism versus voluntarism – are also explored (Cohen et al., 2006). Ethical considerations in relation to the research approach are discussed before outlining the methodology adopted, then considerations of trustworthiness/validity and generalisability. Other key considerations for the conduct of the research are presented before providing details of the population and sample. The process of data gathering, presentation and analysis are then discussed. The conclusion reiterates the suitability of the approach chosen in relation to the overall aims of the study and identifies what follows in the next chapter.

7.2 Research Perspective

As a matter of integrity, due consideration was given to the methodological foundations for this study, ensuring it accorded with the researcher’s beliefs and values, matching philosophical positions to ontology, epistemology as well as human nature and agency (Sikes, 2006). The study could be described as anti-positivist as it did not adhere to scientific method (Morrison, 2003), seeking analytic rather than statistical generalization (Yin, 2009), and idiographic, leaning more towards the nominalist than realist perspective, whereby knowledge is perceived as ‘personal, subjective and unique’, leading the researcher to become involved with the research subjects (Cohen et al., 2006: 6). As such, a subjectivist rather than an objectivist approach was adopted, in keeping with a naturalistic/interpretive perspective, perceiving reality as constructed rather than perceiving of ‘an
overarching reality to which data, gathered in different contexts, approximates’ (Silverman, 2005: 121).

The empirical methodology adopted was based on a grounded inductive-deductive model, whereby an iterative process was employed moving back-and-forth between data gathered and theory proposed (Charmaz, 2006). In this regard, the research was ‘a combination of both experience and reasoning’ (Cohen et al., 2006: 5).

At the preliminary stages, there was a temptation to form a hypothesis for testing. By adopting an interpretive perspective, resisting external form and structure to understand the experience of research participants (Cohen et al., 2006) it was hoped that theory would emerge from particular situations, ‘grounded’ on data generated (Charmaz, 2006: 2; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Theory followed rather than preceded the research. Critical theory (questioning the status quo of the organisation and seeking to understand the processes of change at play), rather than problem-solving theory (identifying issues within an organisation and setting about addressing them within the prevailing structure) emerged (Morrison, 2003). Within this emergent approach pre-defining the data sought was guarded against, inevitably resulting in large amounts of data being generated (Charmaz, 2006; Robson, 1993).

Given my history with the three headteachers, as programme director of the headship preparation programme they completed, and my experience of working with them as field assessors for that programme over recent years, it is questionable the extent to which a truly grounded approach (Bryman, 2004) could have been adopted. Moreover, the idea of theory simply emerging from pure observation would have been a myth as some conceptual orientation was required if only to recognise the field of study (Silverman, 2005: 107): ‘Without theory, research is impossibly narrow. Without research, theory is mere armchair contemplation’. Some initial theory development was also necessary in the case study design phase (Yin, 2009).

An inevitable tension existed in the life story approach between using an outside frame of reference or theory to enable fuller appreciation of the story, whilst suspending theoretical assumptions until the process was complete (Atkinson, 1998). An iterative process was adopted but it could not claim to be fully grounded.
Prior theory arising from the literature served as a backdrop for the interpretation of the narrative accounts (Riessman, 2008: 74) within a ‘case-centred commitment’. A detailed literature review was delayed, to avoid introducing and imposing preconceived ideas on the developing analysis (Charmaz, 2006). As such, loose theory (as distinct from hypotheses) guided the research process through ‘constant comparative methods’ (Charmaz, 2006: 178), creating ‘a dialogical relationship between the data and existing (literature, professional knowledge and experience) and emerging concepts’ (Burton et al., 2008: 66). The research questions themselves developed as the study progressed (Silverman, 2007), guarding against them presenting barriers to understanding. This required ‘a great deal of patience, diligence and caution’ (Cowan, 2005: 69).

Through a multi-method balance, the main concern was to gain ‘an understanding of the way in which the individual creates, modifies and interprets the world’, emphasising ‘the importance of the subjective experience of individuals in the creation of the social world’ (Cohen et al., 2006: 7). The sacrifice was to forego scope in search of detail, ‘found in the precise particulars of such matters as people’s understandings and interactions’ (Silverman, 2005: 9).

Within this qualitative small-scale empirical study, using interpretative enquiry with aspects of a grounded approach, an evaluative story-telling as well as theory-seeking and theory-testing case study method was conducted (Bassey, 1999 and 2003). A constructivist approach to interviewing utilised narrative analysis whereby coherent life stories and knowledge were constructed emphasising the production of the social world (Elliott, 2005). A life history approach took into account historical context and conditions of social construction (Goodson and Sikes, 2001). As such, the nature of theory generated did not call upon universal laws which objectivists or positivists search for (Cohen et al., 2006). There was no search for a grand narrative or universal case (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Instead of beginning inquiry in theory, the research began with experience as expressed in the lived and told stories (Charmaz, 2006; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) of the three headteachers who formed the case studies.

It was acknowledged that an emphasis on narrative could be criticised ‘in a climate where the positivist paradigm maintains its hegemony’ (Goodson and Sikes, 2001: 69).
106) for the blurring of fact and fiction (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) since truths are inevitably partial, ‘committed and incomplete’ (Riessman, 2008: 186). However, a different perspective embraces the coming of age of narrative inquiry, gaining legitimisation in social research (Cohen et al., 2006), impacting throughout the social sciences and humanities (Atkinson, 1998; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Goodson and Sikes, 2001: 3; Riessman, 2008) with accessible findings enabling a variety of audiences to ‘gain a recognizable impression of how particular lives are lived and expressed in a day-to-day context’.

7.3 Methodological Foundations and Approach to Research
This study adopted a naturalistic approach, or ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 2002; Rawls, 2000 and 2008; Silverman, 2005), focused on analysing social episodes from the perspective and interpretations of the research subjects themselves in terms of how they make sense of their social world within the workplace (Psathas, 1996). It could be described as ‘ethogenic method’ (Cohen et al., 2006: 21). Similarities to ethnography (rather than observation) are evident, drawing from ‘highly descriptive writing about particular groups of people’, endeavouring to ‘locate the mundane features of extraordinary situations and to identify what is remarkable in everyday life’ (Silverman, 2007: 12; 23).

The study could not, however, be described as strictly ethnographic as the researcher was not immersed in the schools studied. Such an approach could have generated rich data through the interpretation of context, culture and social structure to describe accounts of practice. However, that would have relied on researcher interpretation and for this study, the emphasis was on the interpretations of the headteachers themselves to reach a depth of understanding of and produce ‘thick descriptions’ for the complex social relationships inherent in complex human/leadership behaviour (Bryman, 2004; Punch, 2005). To this end, the study utilised the fact that the subjects themselves were submerged in the research context, ‘to gain an insider’s depiction of the studied world’ in order to access the significance of their actions and reactions (Charmaz, 2006: 21). In this way, a micro-ethnographic approach (Bryman, 2004: 293) was utilised, involving a specific focus within a comparatively shorter period of time. In so doing, it was hoped the strengths of an ethnographic approach could be harnessed, reaching implicit understandings and interpreting experiences from each participant’s perspective (Robson, 1993).
Weaknesses of an ethnographic approach were guarded against, namely generating subjective interpretations of events, along with researcher bias. As such, the study adopted an interpretive (Kinder, 2010; Morrison, 2003) rather than normative paradigm, concerned for the individual along with the significance of actions as future oriented intentional behaviour. Not surprisingly, the word ‘experience’ appears throughout this chapter, social sciences being underpinned by the study of experience (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

The methodology employed would best be described as multi-method, no single method of research viewed inherently better than another. Indeed proposing a polarised view of quantitative and qualitative methods is unhelpful (Silverman, 2005), constituting a false dichotomy within the normative paradigm argument (Oakley, 1998 and 1999). By drawing from the strengths of both techniques, the strengths of each were utilised whilst minimising the weaknesses inherent in any approach, creating a complementary outcome (Wragg, 1994). As such, the cost effective benefits of quantitative methods coupled with their relatively straightforward data collation, presentation and comparison was utilised for the 360° questionnaire. Data generated was combined with additional data drawn from the headteacher interviews and diaries, to elicit greater depth of insight into relationships between people, social interactions along with their meanings and effects. Conversely, the time consuming, costly and small-scale nature of qualitative methods such as interviews was counterbalanced by the broader views of staff elicited from the 360° questionnaire and sociometric analysis. Moreover, staff views supported the headteachers’ reflection on the lived rather than designed reality of contextualised leadership practices (Spillane and Coldren, 2011).

7.4 Ethical Considerations

All research is ‘an inherently political activity …[having] a bearing on how human beings make sense of their world’, involving ethical issues and considerations (Goodson and Sikes, 2001: 89; Gunter, 2012). Consideration was given to (Cohen et al., 2006: 49): the nature of the research project itself; the context of the research; procedures adopted; data collection methods; the nature of the participants; the type of data collected; and what was done with the data, including its publication.
Access to Data Generated and Informed Consent

In addition to the usual risk of manipulation and betrayal between an ethnographer and her subjects (Oakley, 1999), the researcher’s relationship to the case study headteachers led to considerable care being taken with eliciting access and informed consent. Recognition was given to the key role of gatekeepers and informants. Access to the potential sample was gained through the LA SQH coordinator (with responsibility for leadership CPD). Access to each school was gained through each headteacher. The SQH coordinator had a ‘duty of care’ for the headteachers and the headteachers had a ‘duty of care’ for their staff. In recognition of this, access and initial consent was sought and gained from LA partners as soon as the proposal for this PhD study was accepted. The mechanism used for this was through TEAC, the steering group for the SQH programme, proceedings from which are formally recorded in minutes subsequently circulated. This was the initial step towards access, however, and a long way from securing informed consent.

Given the study’s constructivist nature, with case studies formed around the three headteachers and narrative accounts gathered from them (Elliott, 2005), consideration of informed consent was taken very seriously. Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 171) highlight the complexities inherent in this area, asserting that ‘From a legalistic point of view, the questions of informed consent are insoluble and would, in a study of any degree of complexity, bring it to a halt’. As such, ‘moral responsibility’ with ‘standard ethics protocol’, involving ‘being fair, honest, clear and straightforward’ was adhered (Atkinson, 1998: 37; 36), balancing ethical considerations whilst progressing the research. The research methods literature was helpful in this regard (Bassey, 1999; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Cohen et al., 2006; Robson, 1993; Stenhouse, 1988). Four elements to informed consent were considered – competence, voluntarism, full information and comprehension – the principle of which arises from the subject’s right to freedom and self-determination, placing ‘some of the responsibility on the participant should anything go wrong in the research’ (Cohen et al., 2006: 51). Given the screening process established for entry into the SQH programme, participants were considered competent. Every effort was taken to ensure the other three elements were satisfied. Accordingly, a freely-made choice based on participants being sufficiently informed about the research being undertaken was sought (Alderson, 1995; Busher, 2003).
A range of potential issues was anticipated inherent in gaining trust and developing relationships within contemporary bureaucratic, technical and logistical contexts (Burton et al., 2008) but none were experienced. This was perhaps in large part due to the professional respect the researcher enjoyed from each of the headteachers involved. In that sense, the sample had elements of convenience sampling.

Throughout the study, care was taken to ensure participants were well aware of its purpose, the intention of eliciting their views, how anonymity would be assured, that they were under no obligation to participate and, that they could opt out at any point (Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Lee, 1993). This was particularly important as I was in a position of perceived ‘power’ in my position as director of the SQH programme. As such, it was also important to establish that nothing in the study would influence the professional contact between researcher and respondents. During the first interview exemplification of practice was established (Holloway and Jefferson, 2000 in Elliott, 2005) based on each participant agreeing to proceed with the interview based on a mutual understanding, clear that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could not only decline to answer any question but end the interview at any point (Atkinson, 1998). At the beginning of each interview, the focus was revisited and at the end, the protocol for reviewing transcripts and consenting to their use was reiterated. The process relating to the 360° analysis was rehearsed with each headteacher and the pack of papers for members of staff made clear the salient points.

In this way, confidence was inspired and maintained throughout each case study, consent was never taken for granted and was continuously sought. A progressive entry approach was adopted (Lee, 1993) where, only after having secured access at each stage, does the researcher move on to the next. Perhaps as a result of such efforts, neither physical nor social accesses proved elusive.

The research aimed to build understandings and accurate interpretations of events. In that regard, the building of trust was crucial (Lee, 1993) to prevent against barriers leading to participants constructing fronts compromising true access or presenting simplicity of knowledge of deviance. In order to guard against that outcome, a progressive entry approach along with the notion of ‘exchange’ where participants
feel they directly gain from participation (Lee, 1993) made positive contributions. From the outset, the headteachers were encouraged to perceive of the research as assisting their school’s self-evaluation process.

**Narrative Enquiry Issues**

Given the nature of this study, one might expect much guidance to be available in the narrative literature but this was not found to be the case (Elliott, 2005). More general guidance was therefore drawn from. A balance was sought (Bassey, 1999) between researcher’s and respondent’s rights in respect for democracy, subject to ethical responsibilities, a respect for truth or rather, trustworthiness and a respect for respondents and the data generated. It was acknowledged however that ethical values can conflict with one another (Bassey, 1999). That said every effort was taken to adhere to the ethical guidelines developed by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011), including a respect for educational research itself, seeking to enhance the image of research.

Through considering the potential impact on participants, recognition was given to research being neither neutral nor innocent (Sikes, 2006), with the need to consider carefully the use of the findings along with any corresponding potential moral or ethical issues. As such, the key aim of the ethical approach adopted (Burton et al., 2008: 52; 58), was to ‘develop and maintain non-exploitative social and personal relationships’, applying ‘moral principles to prevent harming or wronging others, to promote the good, to be respectful and to be fair’. However, any research carries with it a potential risk to participants (Busher, 2003). Within a narrative or life history approach, respondents are required ‘to make a considerable commitment in terms of time and intimacy of involvement’ (Goodson and Sikes, 2001: 90). Furthermore, ‘personal narratives deal with the meaning of one’s own life experiences and thus touch on issues of personal identity’ (Elliott, 2005: 140). Participants can sometimes find the process painful, as distressing events can be revisited (Goodson and Sikes, 2001). This increases the potential for harm, raising additional ethical questions, although social research is intrusive and may not be a positive experience for participants (Elliott, 2005). Conversely, life story narrative can be of significant respondent value, helping the person ‘clarify or understand something that might not have been understood as much as possible before the telling’ (Atkinson, 1998: 12). A minority of respondents may find the involvement in a life history project has life-
changing effects (Goodson and Sikes, 2001) although caution is advised here (Riessman, 2008).

The case study method, narrative interview and sociometric analysis approaches raised specific issues in relation to anonymity and confidentiality. Although generally, ‘no one will mind being identified if the report is complimentary’ (Bell, 2003), this does not necessarily hold true with the particular participants comprising this study. The very nature of face-to-face interview meant participants could not expect anonymity, although care was taken with confidentiality by not referring to participants’ names or including information which would enable the identification of an individual (Cohen et al., 2006). Moreover, ‘privacy, confidentiality and a non-condemnatory attitude … provid[ed] a framework of trust’ within which, respondents could discuss ‘deep, personally threatening and potentially painful’ issues (Lee, 1993: 98). It was important to discuss the dissemination of the research in relation to the thesis itself and to potential publications arising from it. This was further emphasised in the interview release form accompanying each interview transcript sent to each headteacher (Lieblich, 1996). Beyond it not necessarily being possible to guarantee anonymity within case study (Elliott, 2005), narrative and life story approaches (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), confidentiality and anonymity are not always desirable if leading to participants feeling their voices have been silenced (Mishler, 1986 in Elliott, 2005).

Consideration was given to the ownership of field notes, with the general view of good practice being to take narrative accounts back to participants in draft form for comment (if not approval), checking for adequate disguising of identities, seeking informed consent for the use of the content of each interview transcript (Atkinson’s, 1998; Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Riessman, 2008). However, there is no consensus as to who owns the narrative accounts, researcher or respondent (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). By sharing the transcripts, it was hoped that the headteachers would agree with my ‘depiction’ (Sikes, 2006: 114). Although not faced with this dilemma, I considered the approach to take if any of the headteachers disagreed with my representation of their accounts, leaning towards including ‘a note to the effect that the informant(s) took a different view’ (Goodson and Sikes, 2001: 36). In the longer term, it would seem ethical to share the outcomes of the study (Bushler, 2003) perhaps with an account of the findings of the research (Sammons, 1989).
Every care was taken with the storage of data during and at the conclusion of the research (Busher, 2003).

**Case Study Issues**

Perhaps unconventionally, this study accorded with Yin’s (2009) view that direct, detailed observation is not always appropriate as a source of evidence in case studies. It was felt that an external observer would have significantly impacted on those being observed (Jones and Somekh, 2005). Participant observation was considered, characterising *‘the most subtly intrusive of all the styles of observing’* (Simpson and Tuson, 1995: 14-15). As I would have become the *‘research instrument’* (Robson, 1993: 194-199) only basic equipment would have been required to gather insights, wholistic interpretations and revelations of actors’ meanings.

However, such an approach would have meant fewer schools were included in the study, without greater quality of data being assured. Moreover, a number of constraints were recognised with participant observation. It can be difficult to distinguish between roles and to fulfil the expectations and responsibilities of each (Clough and Barton, 1995). Although substantial time and energy are required, reflection time can be limited. Remaining objective can be difficult, leading to coloured observations and interpretations. Selective recall and selective perception along with accentuated perception can be issues. There is also a real danger of ‘going native’ (Swain in Clough and Barton, 1995). Bias can be introduced through an attempt to protect colleagues and defend practice. And, on a more personal level (Torrance, 1998: 43): ‘Participant observation is like having an itch and not being able to scratch it’.

In order to understand the culture and processes of groups, instead of researcher-conducted observation, the headteachers interviewed were regarded in some sense participant observers (Moyles, 2003). In this way, understandings of culture and group processes ‘from the inside’ became possible since the headteachers observed staff *‘in the daily life of the people under the study… observing things that happen, listening to what is said, and questioning people, over some length of time’* (Becker and Geer, 1957: 28). The researcher's objective lens guards against the disadvantages of participant observation. However, as returned to under reflexivity,
within a narrative approach the researcher is ‘in the parade we presume to study’, ‘fully involved … [required to] step back and see their own stories in the inquiry, the stories of the participants, as well as the larger landscape on which they all live’ (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 81).

**Analysis Concerns**

Within a narrative or life history approach, consideration of ethical issues extends beyond the data gathering stages (Elliott, 2005) to include the potential impact on participants of the researcher’s interpretation and analysis of the narrative, the structure or form the narrative is given, and the potential for identification of the participant if their identity forms part of the discussion. Such consideration contributed to the decision not to convert the interview transcripts, even those pertaining to the second narrative interview, into full narrative or life story accounts. Consideration was given to constructing a specific type of second-order narrative (Elliott, 2005: 13) with the individuals as the unit of analysis, building a collective story (Richardson, 1990).

7.5 **Trustworthiness/Validity and Generalisability**

This study could be described as anti-positivist and idiographic, leaning more towards the nominalist rather than the realist perspective, whereby knowledge is perceived as ‘personal, subjective and unique’ leading the researcher to become involved with the research subjects (Cohen et al., 2006: 6). As such, a subjectivist rather than an objectivist approach was adopted. If a key strength of ethnographic and indeed qualitative research is its ability to ‘define its research problems in a way that makes immediate sense to practitioners and administrators’ and ‘its ability to depict what happens in situ’ (Silverman, 2007: 87; 91), the length of completion, along with the unrepresentative nature of the sample, could be perceived as key weaknesses.

**Trustworthiness As An Alternative To Validity**

As a form of case-centred inquiry (Riessman, 2008: 195), narrative research with its emphasis on ‘trustworthiness’ offers a pragmatic alternative to validity and generalisability. Trustworthiness is the preferred construct for a number of authors (Atkinson, 1998; Bush, 2003b; Lincoln and Guba, 1985 in Bassey, 1999; Elliott, 2005; Mishler, 1990; Riessman, 2008). Transparency becomes key in terms of
making methodological decisions clear, describing the production of interpretations and the availability of primary data. Sufficient case study data was therefore collected (Bassey, 1999) to enable the exploration of significant features, create plausible interpretations, test for the trustworthiness of interpretations, construct a convincing argument/story and provide an audit trail. In adopting a life story approach, personal truth was acknowledged from the subjective point of view (Atkinson, 1998; Riessman, 2008), internal consistency, coherence and plausibility becoming important quality checks.

Validation rather than validity becomes the important term (Mishler, 1990). Generalisability is not sought within a life history approach (Goodson and Sikes, 2001). Instead of a random sample, selection is on the basis of respondents having the knowledge and experience of the research topic to enable them to talk for extended periods of time. External validity is not an appropriate construct (Bassey, 1999) since each case involves the study of a singularity chosen because of its interest to the researcher, rather than representing a typical example. Moreover, qualitative studies tend to involve the interviewing of ‘a small, relatively homogeneous sample of individuals living in a specific geographic area’, immediately raising issues of generalisability (Elliott, 2005: 22-25). Instead of ‘reliability’ and ‘internal/external validity’, researchers ‘pay attention to the stability, trustworthiness, and scope of their findings’. The use of narrative is thought to improve validity through empowering participants to describe life experiences by providing concrete and specific details, using their own language and conceptual framework. Consequently, the sample for this study was purposive with an element of convenience.

Atkinson (1998: 21) argues, ‘the life story interview has its own standards of reliability and validity, distinct from quantitative research methods’. Qualitative researchers contest that validity and reliability require to be interpreted differently, avoiding a positivist perspective (Bush, 2003b; Maxwell, 1992 in Cohen et al., 2006), ‘authenticity’ (Bush, 2003b) and ‘understanding’ being more appropriate terms than ‘validity’. Cohen et al. (2006: 107) recognise that external validity is problematic for ethnographers because of their view of the complexity and uniqueness of socially situated human behaviour, presenting the alternative term ‘internal validity’ in which explanations are sustained by the data. Elliott (2005: 204)
also recognises the distinction, ‘where internal validity refers to the ability to produce results that are not simply an artefact of the research design, and external validity is a measure of how far the findings relating to a particular sample can be generalized to apply to a broader population’. Cohen et al. (2006: 107) offer further discussion on this, ‘The claim is made (Agar, 1993) that, in qualitative data collection, the intensive personal involvement and in-depth responses of individuals secure a sufficient level of validity and reliability’. Others (Hammersley, 1992; Silverman, 1993), however, would contest that claim.

There are no simple solutions to such challenges. Indeed, ‘quantitative researchers have no “golden key” to validity’ (Silverman, 2005: 211). Robson (1993), and Lincoln and Guba (1985), argue that for qualitative research, considerations such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are alternatives to internal and external validity (generalisability), reliability and objectivity necessary for quantitative research. Burton et al. (2008: 60) suggest that for the interpretative researcher, ‘Reality is perceived as a human construct’. Cohen et al. (2006: 133) provide support for this view, ‘the validity of any life history lies in its ability to represent the informant’s subjective reality, …his or her definition of the situation’. In order to build confidence in the data generated and outcomes from the analysis, keeping transparency (Robson, 2002) at the forefront of one’s mind was key. All data was considered, not simply that supporting a viewpoint. Alternative interpretations were explored, as well as evidence and/or feedback to corroborate an emerging view (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Limitations to Generalisation
This case study research represented ‘a concentration on the specific rather than the general – a choice of depth over breadth’ (Burton et al., 2008: 67). As such, it could not enable ‘statistical generalisations’ (Robson, 1993: 167) or claim to be generalisable to the wider population (Gomm, Hammersley and Foster, 2000). However, generalisability is not necessarily important or relevant for case study research. A case may be studied for intrinsic interest, naturalistic generalisations being made where similarities are noteworthy from specific instances (Stake, 2000). In place of quantitative, statistical generalisation, narrative analysis and qualitative case study research strive for transferable analytic generalisation, generalising findings to a broader theory, tested by replication (Riessman, 2008; Yin, 2009),

Due to the number of cases involved in this study, the findings have clear limitations and could not claim to be representative but they could have relevance to a similar population group (Bell, 1993). It was hoped that by taking account of the research findings, this research might ultimately contribute to improving the quality of educational policy-making and practice both at school and possibly (in some very small way) at local authority and national levels, whilst recognising that the focus for research can only be understood within its cultural context (Coleman and Briggs, 2003).

7.6 Other Key Considerations for the Conduct of the Research

From the three methods of discovery - to watch people and try to work out what is going on, to ask them about it or to look out for ‘fingerprints’ amongst the evidence they leave behind (Robson, 1993: 187) - this study focused on asking people either directly, or through a questionnaire. Appropriate methods were utilised to work in harmony, for the purpose of the study, recognising the varying efficiency (Cohen and Manion, 1985) and inherent advantages and disadvantages of each (Simpson and Tuson, 1995). A logical design enabled utilisation of the methods to elicit evidence to answer the research questions (Lewis and Munn, 1987). An ‘inclusive and pluralistic’ view was sought drawing from methods employed for three purposes, ‘exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory’ (Yin, 2009: 7-8). Methods were ‘feasible in terms of time, cost, resources, and within the various parameters of [the] particular research contexts’ (Goodson and Sikes, 2001: 20). Beyond ‘mere techniques’ the methods took on ‘a specific meaning according to the methodology in which they [were] used’ (Silverman, 2005: 110). In this regard, two key considerations were acknowledged.

Bias and Reflexivity

Given my background, my professional relationship with the headteachers and the nature of the research methods, potential bias was acknowledged resulting in vigilance rather than elimination (Bell, 1993; Goodson and Sikes, 2001). Recognition was given to sources of bias (Cohen et al., 2006: 121), ‘the characteristics of the interviewer, the characteristics of the respondent, and the
substantive content of the questions’. This does not constitute a criticism of the study (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004: 155), since the interview responses were ‘seen as products of interpretive practice’ and as such, relied on participants’ ‘involved in meaning construction’. From an interpretivist’s view, no objective reality exists devoid of the meanings people bring to it, derived from their experience and contexts within the social world (Cohen et al., 2006; Morrison, 2003).

The norms and values brought to the study from the researcher’s experience were continually considered in any interpretations. From a grounded theory perspective, since ‘the very understanding gained from the theory rests on the theorist’s interpretation of the studied phenomenon’, ‘the theory depends on the researcher’s view; it does not and cannot stand outside of it’ (Charmaz, 2006: 126; 130). In that regard, I have endeavoured to highlight my own self in the research (Elliott’s, 2005) to enhance rigour (Goodson and Sikes, 2001).

Reflexivity, particularly in relation to the context of data collection and the relationship between interviewer and respondent (Elliott, 2005) was a key concern. My status in respondent’s eyes (Wragg, 2003: 144) could lead to feelings of personal loyalty, calling into question objectivity so caution was maintained in relation to ‘answers that are more a public relations exercise than an accurate response’. This was part of the decision to incorporate the 360° analysis feedback and the sociometric analysis, encouraging respondents not to ‘manage impressions of themselves’ (Lee, 1993: 75) when analysing experiences. The research methods literature was helpful in such deliberations, particularly in consideration of power relationships (Atkinson, 1998; Cohen et al., 2006; Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Gubrium and Holstein, 2009). An additional bias consideration linked to reflexivity which Silverman (2007: 40) raises in specific reference to questionnaire methods, equally applicable to narrative interview: ‘if respondents are made aware of your interests, this can affect their responses’.

An Alternative View Of Triangulation

Given the nature of this study, trustworthiness was the goal rather than a more conventional view of validity (see for example Cohen and Manion, 1985: 254-255). In this way and in keeping with social science approaches, triangulation of data (Cohen et al., 2006; Yin, 2009: 2) was built into the design of the study as ‘an
essential tactic’, ‘to use multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion’. More than methodological triangulation, respondent triangulation (Bush, 2003b) complemented the study’s naturalistic/interpretive approach, ‘both correspondences and discrepancies [were] of value’ (Robson, 1993: 383). In this way, the headteachers reflected on the ‘lived’ rather than the ‘designed’ reality of their schools (Spillane and Coldren, 2011).

7.7 The Population and Sample

Consideration was given to the sample selected in relation to its size, representativeness, parameters, access and sampling strategy (Cohen et al., 2006), to enable analytic generalisation (Yin, 2009). Although the relatively small size could attract criticism (Munn and Drever, 1995), given the ethnographic and qualitative research involved, a small sample was appropriate (Cohen et al., 2006; Goodson and Sikes, 2001). Keeping in proportion the nature and scope of the claims made became important (Simpson and Tuson, 1995). Adequacy (Goodson and Sikes, 2001: 23) was dependent on the ‘richness of the data and the nature of the aspect of life being investigated’, revealing shared patterns of experience or interpretation within a group of people with a common characteristic, attribute or experience, leading to the collection of sufficient data to enable saturation to occur and variation to be both accounted for and understood (Charmaz, 2006; Yin, 2009). In so doing, the sample size was not determined at the beginning of the study but rather, became clear once repetition of themes emerged.

From a population of all Scottish primary headteachers, the sample was carefully constructed using purposive with elements of convenience sampling (Burton et al., 2008; Cohen et al., 2006; Goodson and Sikes, 2001). Cases were included on the basis of their typicality, building up a sample satisfactory to its specific needs, whilst not claiming to represent the wider population, seeking ‘only to represent itself or instances of itself in a similar population, rather that attempting to represent the whole, undifferentiated population’. Each case was selected to illustrate features or processes in which the study was interested (Silverman, 2005). In so doing, the focus for the research conducted became the elicitation of experiences and perceptions of fairly recently appointed primary headteacher SQH graduates, employed by the same local authority, articulating a commitment to taking forward a distributed perspective on leadership and management.
The basis for sample selection could be criticised since, as earlier chapters explored, a national leadership programme heavily influenced by government endorsed policy and a national standard for headship could be accused of propagating Gunter’s (2001 and 2012) view of the repressive role of state sponsored training systems. Although outwith the scope of this thesis to discuss postmodernist perspectives (or whether or not Bourdieu is a postmodernist), it is important to note that Bourdieu’s (1988: 25) work is heavily influential in such views, arguing that attempting to remain neutral ‘is doomed in advance to failure’ (cited in Gunter 2001: 3). As such, it was crucial to ‘stress the importance of recognizing the field as a contested space where dialogue is central to the generation of ideas’ (Gunter and Ribbins, 2002: 387). The field (Gunter, 2001: 13; 139 building on the work of Bourdieu, 1990) was recognised as ‘a competitive arena … linked to who is accepted as having legitimate views’. Care was therefore taken ‘to ask questions about [my] position in relation to knowledge claims’.

Primary headteachers were selected since the literature (e.g. Bell, 2007; Spillane’s work) suggested key differences between the size, structures and complexity of primary and secondary schools would make it difficult to draw parallels between the sectors. By drawing from headteachers within the same local authority, it was anticipated that similar recruitment and selection processes would have been followed and that similar expectations over working practices would provide a frame of reference. By drawing from SQH graduates from the same university programme, it was thought that a similar ‘research into practice’ frame of reference would be provided. From the literature review (e.g. Day, 2009; Pascal and Ribbins, 1998) it was thought that by drawing from headteachers who had been in post for around two years, having had sufficient time to become established and begun to take forward their perspective on leadership and management whilst still thinking through their actions and intentions, reflections on practice would be enhanced. The headteachers’ ages ranged from 33 to 40 years. They were therefore themselves educated within the same education ‘era’ and it was thought, would have a similar historic and professional policy frame of reference. Each headteacher was known to their LA’s SQH coordinator to promote a distributed perspective on leadership and management, and prior to participation, each confirmed this view of their own practice. My professional dealings with the headteachers suggested they would be
able to engage in in-depth discussion around a distributed perspective. During the first interview, each headteacher expressed an interested in the study, articulating the perceived benefits of participating in it as supporting their own continuing professional development, and the school’s self-evaluation and improvement efforts.

Each headteacher was a woman and the researcher was a woman. As such, although outwith the scope of this thesis to explore in any detail, acknowledgement is given to the possibility that the findings and analysis could be influenced by genderalisation in the workplace. Unlike other fields such as sport, leisure and tourism (see various publications by Cara Aitchison) there is very little current discussion within the academic literature pertaining to educational leadership and management in relation to gender. As such, it would be contentious to refer to female or male perspectives on leadership, since feminine and masculine styles can both be enacted by male and female headteachers (Prof. Christine Forde: personal conversation, March 23, 2012). Indeed, ‘in general, gender does not seem to be considered an essential component of the discussion and classification of leadership theory in education’ (Coleman, 2003: 326). Furthermore, Fuller (2010: 363) argues that earlier literature exploring women secondary headteachers ‘is predicated on outmoded theories of gender’. Research on gender in educational leadership styles has had an increasing emphasis on androgyny (Pace and Pace, 2005). This is not to negate that ‘women experience headship differently’ (Coleman, 2002: 325) since ‘orthodox leadership is male’ (Coleman, 2003: 325; 2005), and women are ‘culturally expected to be caring, subjective and personal’ whilst working within ‘a male-dominated organisational culture’ (Oplatka, 2001: 231; 230). Nor is this intended to negate the barriers into headship women may experience (Coleman, 2005) or the constant negotiation women headteachers may experience in relation to their coexisting roles of professional and mother (Bradbury and Gunter, 2006).

Three different types of primary school were selected in the hope that each context might provide each headteacher with different opportunities and challenges in taking forward a distributed perspective. Each school was non-denominational and had a below average free meal entitlement (FME 16.9%) deprivation indicator. The first, was a large urban primary with a school roll of 360, two deputes, no nursery and an FME of 8.6%. The second, was a small rural primary with a school roll of 86, no depute, no nursery and an FME of 8.3%. The third, was a medium sized semi-rural
primary with a school roll of 228, one depute, two nursery classes, a specialist provision class for pupils with special educational needs and an FME of 12%.

7.8 Case Study Method

The three single-site case studies were conducted in sequence between May 2009 and September 2010 with a slight overlap between the completion of one and the commencement of the next. Case study was selected as ‘a choice of depth over breadth’ (Burton et al., 2008: 67), revealing ‘social worlds on their own terms’ (Gubrium and Holstein, 2009: 10), enabling the researcher to ‘concentrate on a specific instance or situation and to identify, or attempt to identify the various interactive processes at work’ (Bell, 1993: 8). Such processes could remain concealed in a large-scale survey.

Each case study represented a bounded system (Cohen et al., 2006), selected illustration of a social entity (Hakim, 1994) and instance in action (Adelman et al., 1976). Of the four broad styles of case study - ethnographic, evaluative, educational and action research (identified by Stenhouse, 1985 and discussed in Bassey, 1999: 27) - the cases in this study more closely matched ethnographic cases. However, there was an element of evaluative case study or comparative method (Hammersley et al., 2000), since each formed a single case within a collection of cases studied at depth to provide information about the extent to which a distributed leadership perspective as promoted in contemporary policy discourse was embedded within the practice of the schools. Furthermore, elements of intrinsic, instrumental and collective case studies (Stake, 2000) were drawn from given that although each case was of interest in itself, it was hoped that each would provide insight into a distributed perspective and that insights gathered across the three cases would investigate that general phenomenon. There were therefore similarities with Kinder’s (2002: 221) ‘use of best practice case studies in service innovation by local public administrations’.

The case studies were mainly descriptive in that each provided narrative accounts but to a small extent, they were also explanatory (if distributed leadership is regarded as a theory to be explored) and the first could be regarded as exploratory since essentially it formed a pilot to the other studies and research questions (Cohen et al., 2006). The study could be described as being of multiple-case design
with embedded (multiple) units of analysis (Yin, 2009). However, ‘Categorization is a dangerous game’ (Bassey, 1999: 64).

Case study is not tied to specific methods of data collection or analysis, tending to encompass more than one method (Hakim, 1994; Robson, 1993; Yin, 2009). Its eclectic nature makes it fairly unique as a method of enquiry. Compatible methods were selected appropriate to the study, practical and ethical considerations (Bassey’s, 1999): narrative analysis helped generate general concepts (Riessman, 2008); findings from the general survey were explored through the highly focused interviews providing depth and insight (Burton et al., 2008). The design of the case studies enabled both propositional and tacit knowledge to be explored (Stake, 2000).

7.9 The Process of Data Gathering
The small-scale empirical nature of this study used interpretative enquiry with aspects of a grounded approach to reach a depth of understanding, with a focus on three headteacher case studies. A sequence of four in-depth, semi-structured interviews was conducted with each of the headteachers, one of which adopted a narrative style. Although not found to be successful as a method, the headteachers were each asked to keep a reflective diary, for a four-week duration. Staff perceptions of school leadership and management were elicited through a 360° analysis, a semi-structured questionnaire exploring the extent to which leadership was distributed within each school. That 360° questionnaire incorporated a sociometric analysis of the leadership relationships within the school. A description of the data gathering methods along with discussion of the process of data gathering now follows.

The original intention was to conduct a pilot of the research methods with one school. It became apparent that the only way to really test the appropriateness of the methodology and design of the data gathering tools was to conduct a ‘live’ process. The grounded nature of the study meant that insights gained informed changes to the research methods, as ‘simultaneous data collection and analysis…shape our data collection to inform our emerging analysis’ (Charmaz, 2006: 20). In this way, the headteacher of the first school agreed to critically evaluate the data gathering tools before and after use. That approach informed the redrafting process.
and more importantly, led to the incorporation of the sociometric analysis. By that stage, my exploration of the distributed leadership literature had moved on and I came to appreciate why Jim Spillane had begun to incorporate sociometric analysis into his research. Having originally agreed to three interviews the first headteacher secured the consent of her staff to participate in the sociometric analysis, participating herself in a fourth interview focused on the outcomes of that analysis. Thereafter, the two items pertaining to the sociometric analysis were built into the 360° questionnaire.

**Interviews**

A sequence of four interviews, each of a maximum duration of two hours (Elliott, 2005: 32) was conducted with each headteacher. The first was fairly structured to agree the broad parameters of the study and its sequential elements, to establish consent, to agree a timeframe and to gather information about the headteacher and the school. The second was narrative in nature, having as its focus the headteacher’s experiences and perceptions of distributed leadership, their journey up until that point in time, what had informed their current practice and what drove that practice. The third was loosely structured around the outcomes of the 360° analysis of staff perceptions in relation to the extent to which leadership was distributed within the school, and what those 360° outcomes meant to the headteacher. The fourth was loosely structured around the outcomes of a sociometric analysis in relation to staff perceptions of the leadership relationships within the school, and what those outcomes meant to the headteacher. Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed word for word in order to provide an accurate record of the discussion.

Central to much social science research (Elliott, 2005) interviews were selected as a method to harness their active and interactive advantages (Burton et al., 2008; Charmaz, 2006; Holstein and Gubrium, 2004: 144). The in-depth nature of the intensive interviews supported each headteacher in recalling processes and approaches taken forward, as well as any direct or indirect role played. The sequence of interviews also enabled information from other sources and hypotheses to be tested in terms of how the views of others concurred with those of the headteacher (Cohen and Manion, 2006) and the relevance to the headteacher of any harmony or discord. Interviews also provided the opportunity to find out what
was in the headteacher’s mind (Patton, 2002) in taking forward a distributed perspective. In this way, interviews provided the opportunity to reach beyond data available from surface questionnaire responses. Moreover, interviews provided the opportunity to explain ambiguities, correct misunderstandings and probe for further clarification (Drever, 1995).

A number of disadvantages were recognised in the use of interviews (Silverman, 2007) since in an interview situation, both parties are engaged in meaning-making and knowledge production; the researcher brings their own perspectives to the analysis and interpretation of responses; and interviewees bring into play multiple identities. Care was therefore taken not to over rely on interviews (Silverman, 2007).

Each headteacher was invited to choose the location they would feel most comfortable being interviewed in (Atkinson, 1998), transpiring as their school or LA centre. Careful consideration was given to the conduct of each interview (Wragg’s (2003: 156), preparing the ground, ensuring on each occasion ‘the purpose and aftermath’ was understood, using a gentle yet purposeful lead in and on conclusion, providing the opportunity for the headteacher to raise anything they still wished to cover or to ask any questions, discussing confidentiality. In keeping with a narrative or life story approach to interviews, the ending of each was carefully handled (Elliott, 2005) including the use of Atkinson’s (1998) closure questions.

Each interview was followed up with a letter of thanks enclosing a copy of the interview transcript and consent form, inviting feedback, comment or further discussion of areas for clarification. This was for two main reasons. The first, based on guidance from Atkinson (1998: 61) and Riessman (2008) related to the interviewee being regarded as ‘the first author’ and as such, ‘any changes made to the story acknowledges the storyteller’s primary role in the process rather than affecting validity’. And second, based on ‘closure’ since ‘It is critical to the trust and integrity of the work that researchers do not simply walk away when “their time has come”’ (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 74).

Although only the second interview could be closely described as a narrative or life story method, the conduct of each of the other interviews deliberately encouraged the headteachers to ‘open up’ and provide detailed narrative reflections. In this way,
the advice of Elliott (2005), Riessman (2008) and Atkinson (1998) was carefully considered. Each of the headteachers did appear to ‘like telling stories’, only requiring ‘a little encouragement [to] provide narrative accounts of their experiences’ particularly when invited ‘to talk about specific times and situations, rather than asking about [their] life over a long period of time’ (Elliott, 2005: 29; 29; 30). A relatively unstructured, informal, conversation-type encounter (Atkinson, 1998; Goodson and Sikes, 2001) was followed, the degree of structure varying across the four interviews, depending on their purpose.

_Narrative Inquiry_
The second in the sequence of four interviews utilised a narrative approach to explore key experiences and perceptions of each headteacher in relation to developing a distributed perspective on leadership and management. Interest was in how primary headteachers in their early years of headship situate leadership and management theory and policy into practice, with specific reference to a distributed perspective. Each headteacher determined what they focused on: their early leadership experiences; progressing their SQH school improvement project; observing others’ leadership and management approaches; experience from the first years of headship. Through recounting their stories, each headteacher reflected on meanings, understandings and implications (Atkinson, 1998; Silverman, 2007).

Riessman (2008: 4) traces the roots of the narrative form back to Aristotle’s exploration of the Greek tragedy then later, ‘narrative theory shifted with French structuralism, Russian formalism, post structuralism, cultural analysis, and post modernism’. She (2008: 14) describes narrative inquiry as a twentieth century development in the human sciences, which ‘buds early, but flowers in the mid-1980s with challenges to realism and positivism. Today, the field is a veritable garden of cross-disciplinary hybrids’. However, Riessman (2008: 11) recognises both the ‘family of methods’ narrative analysis encompasses, and the ‘conflict and disagreement’ between family members.

Elliott (2005) gives an account of the development of interest in narrative since the early 1980s, drawing on the work of Daniel Bertaux (1981 Biography and Society) and Elliot Mishler (1986 Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative) as well as the journal _Narrative and Life History_ (now the _Narrative Inquiry_ ) published since
1991, a series of edited collections by Josselson and Lieblichs’ (1993) on The Narrative Study of Lives which began in 1993, and the work of Riessman (1993) on narrative analysis. Elliott (2005: 7; 3) identifies the three key or defining features of narrative as being chronological, meaningful and social. Cortazzi (2003: 200) identifies at least four reasons behind the importance of narrative analysis with its focus on experience and meanings; concern with providing representation; ability to tap into the ‘humanity of teaching and learning and of its leadership’; and ability to explore research activity itself.

Although the second interviews encourage narrative responses, the stories elicited were not developed into fully formed narratives (Elliott, 2005: 9 drawing on the work of Labov and Waletzky, 1997) incorporating the six separate elements of an abstract, orientation, the complicating action, the evaluation, the resolution and lastly the coda, which returns the perspective to the present. Although not all narratives necessarily include all of these six elements, at a minimum a narrative must include the complicating action i.e. a temporal component, while it is the evaluation that has been highlighted as crucial for establishing the point or the meaning of the story. For the purposes of this study, the decision was taken not to develop the narrative responses into a coherent story but rather to search through the headteachers’ narrative reflections for key underlying themes.

In this way, the second interviews could be described as having similarities to oral history interviews, as ‘one of the most common interview formats in narrative inquiry’ (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 111). Or, they could be described as life story interviews (Atkinson, 1998: 3), sharing similarities and parallels to Elliott’s narrative analysis, including its structure of ‘beginnings, conflicts, and resolutions with many repetitions of this pattern’. Atkinson (1998: 13) provides an account of ‘life story’ as a narrative form evolving from oral history, life history, and other ethnographic approaches, contending that the life story approach is transferable across disciplines, ‘to gain a subjective perspective on and understanding of whatever the scope of the topic or issue is under consideration’.

The attraction of this method (Atkinson, 1998: 13-14) was to gain a better understanding of the experiences and perceptions of the headteachers within their school contexts and of the ‘social reality existing outside the story, described by the
story (Bertaux, 1981), as well as about the story itself as a social construct (Rosenthal, 1993)’. In so doing, insights were sought in relation to defining their ‘place in the social order of things and the process used to achieve that fit’ as well as explaining their ‘understanding of social events, movements, and political causes’ and how they ‘see certain events or movements and how the way they see, experience, or interpret those social events links to their individual development (Stewart, 1994)’.

One key way in which Atkinson’s (1998: 4; 5) life story interview approach differs from Elliott’s narrative analysis is that the life story ‘is as close to 100% in the words of the insider-storyteller as it can be’. Even within this difference however, there is a similarity in the respective roles of the subject and researcher. Narrative inquiry attracts criticism by those, ‘making the claim of co-optation of voice’ (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 75). Life history attracts criticism because of its positioning of the life history within historical context, preventing it from becoming ‘uncoupled from the conditions of their social construction’ (Goodson and Sikes, 2001: 17).

In the gathering of data through the approaches described, the ability to ‘listen attentively and beyond what is actually being said’ and to ‘ask pertinent questions in a non-threatening manner’ was centrally important, along with being ‘the sort of person that people want to talk to’ (Goodson and Sikes, 2001: 20-26). Active interviewers ‘converse with respondents in such a way that alternate possibilities and considerations come into play’ (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004: 151). Through so doing, the researcher seeks to hear and understand another person’s story, telling it back to them, ‘in a new way’ (Hooks, 1990: 151). In this sense, there are parallels with a coaching model (Blackman, 2010; Bloom et al., 2005; Hanbury, 2009; Robertson, 2009): listening ‘in an emotionally attentive and engaged way… demanding as it does an abandonment of the self in a quest to enter the world of another’ (Riessman’s, 2008: 26-27); exemplifying ‘the ability to be humane, empathic, sensitive, and understanding’, being ‘the best listener possible’, developing ‘a bridge of trust… and acceptance’ (Atkinson’s, 1998: 28; 33; 35). In so doing, ‘turn taking is disrupted, or suspended, for a time and the other conversational participants give the story-teller privileged access to the floor (Coates, 1996; Sacks, 1992)’ (Elliott, 2005: 10) with ‘longer turns at talk than are
customary in ordinary conversations, … requir[ing] investigators to give up control’ (Riessman, 2008: 24).

My experience of coaching in headteacher preparation programmes (O’Brien and Sharp, 2008; Torrance and Pritchard, 2010; Torrance, 2011) was extremely useful in this regard, particularly in the activation of narrative storytelling (Gubrium and Holstein, 2009). More common interview technique was also drawn from (Drever, 1995) relating to use of prompts to elicit what is already in the respondent’s mind and probes to clarify interpretations of what the headteachers said.

In adopting a constructionist approach (Elliott, 2005: 21; 22) each headteacher was considered ‘an artful narrator’, the aim of each narrative interview being to stimulate their ‘interpretive capacities’ and to activate the production of narratives. The interview was therefore considered a site for data production as well as an opportunity to explore meaning. Following Elliott’s (2005: 20) advice, the format of the interview was a ‘topic for inclusion in the research agenda’ with the headteachers.

Reflective Diary
On the suggestion of the first headteacher, the reflective diary was built into the research methods as an additional strategy to encourage reflection on practice and further inform the sequence of interviews. Although not found to be successful as a method, the headteachers were each asked to keep a reflective diary, for a four-week duration, having as its focus three key questions:

1. What do you think you have done this week that has contributed to your efforts to distribute leadership in your school?
2. What do you think has been particularly successful?
3. What have been some of the challenges encountered?

As a method, diary provides the potential to ‘capture the particulars of experience in a way that is not possible using traditional designs’ (Bolger et al., 2003: 579; Bloor and Woods, 2006), eliciting ‘a deeper degree of reflection’, enabling the researcher ‘to some extent to enter the participants’ subjective realm of experience’ (Lewis et al., 2005: 216 and 226) particularly if combined with interview method to ‘provide insight into social life that would not be possible by other means’ (Bloor and Woods,
2006: 52; Elliott, 1997; Woods, 2006). As a method, diary was therefore considered appropriate for incorporation into this study, complementary to the other methods.

However, for a variety of reasons (reflected by Bolger et al., 2003), only the second headteacher kept the diary for the four-week duration, the third headteacher partially kept a diary and the first headteacher did not manage to keep one at all. This may well reflect the busy nature of a headteacher’s role and their difficulty in making time for sustained reflection. As such, regularly generating a sequence of detailed entries, the defining characteristic of diaries, was not achieved (Alaszewski, 2006). There may have been more that could have been done to elicit responses beyond the weekly email with shell attachment and follow up reminder emails. Indeed, in a larger scale study with a research team and enhanced resourcing, an electronic ‘experience sampling method log’ as described by Spillane et al. (2007) or a daily web-based ‘leadership practice log’ as described by Spillane and Zuberi (2009) could have enhanced the other methods. However, as a method, the diary did not prove successful in this study. Where apposite entries are available, they are referred to within the respective case study chapter.

360° Analysis Questionnaire

Questionnaires would have been entirely inappropriate for the purpose of this study on their own: lacking depth (Munn and Drever, 1995); tending to generate descriptions rather than explanations; not providing the quality of data required, enabling analysis rather than interpretation of data (Robson, 1993: 243). Generally, questionnaires, ‘are more suitable for larger populations, … being asked to respond in short and simplified ways’ (Burton et al., 2008: 80). The questionnaire method is not infrequently utilised to ‘work in tandem’ with the case study method (Bassey, 2003: 115).

The questionnaire for this study was semi-structured (Cohen et al., 2006). School staff were asked to complete the 27 items, to elicit their perceptions of the extent to which leadership was distributed within their school. The construction of items was given careful consideration (Borg and Gall, 1989; Burns, 2000), designed to elicit facts, behaviour and attitudes (Robson, 1993), crafted to avoid ambiguity of wording, imprecision or assumption. Double, leading or presuming questions were avoided (Bell, 1993). A mixture of closed and open-ended items was used to guard
against respondent levels of frustration (Fowler, 2002). Open items were used to elicit information about closed items while closed items were used to elicit structured responses, enabling quantification and comparison (Bell, 1993). Open items also provided the possibility of eliciting unpredicted issues (Burns, 2000). The layout was designed to be clear whilst varied, to avoid a repetitive response pattern and attractive, to encourage completion. In addition, cognisance was taken of the need to keep questionnaires brief and relatively quick to complete (Munn and Drever, 1995).

The 360° questionnaire was initially piloted with a headteacher ‘critical friend’ before a full pilot of the process was conducted with the first school. The initial pilot served to identify any issues with the language used, any ambiguities or other difficulties encountered with completion, along with gauging how long the questionnaire would take to complete, which could then be shared with respondents with the aim of maximising the response rate. The full pilot suggested that a change in the ordering of some of the items might be helpful. And, as previously discussed, the two items pertaining to the sociometric analysis were built into the 360° questionnaire for the second and third schools. The final version of the questionnaire was estimated by the pilot respondents to take around thirty minutes to fully complete. It comprised 27 items over five pages of A4. Each respondent was provided with a pack of materials containing a letter of introduction, the 360° questionnaire with a return date agreed by the headteacher concerned and an envelope for its return. In addition to the standard pack, the headteachers also received a double-sided information sheet about the process and its administration. Copies of the papers provided can be found in Appendix 1. Through such detailed consideration of aspects such as survey length and complexity; logistics and scheduling; introduction, articulated purpose and usefulness; method of distribution, return and follow-up process, the intention was to follow guidance available on maximising return rates and in so doing, maximise sample size and reduce bias (see for example Bogen, 1996; Edwards et al., 2002; Goodell, n.d.; Buyer and Miller, 2008; Nakash et al., 2006).

The headteacher of each school suggested that it would be best if they introduced the survey, made clear the voluntary nature of the study and provided their staff with time to complete the questionnaire should they elect to participate. Having considered how best to encourage a higher response rate than that which might
typically be expected from a questionnaire, it was agreed that a postal return was not desirable (Fogelman, 2003; Gillham, 2000). As an alternative, respondents placed their completed questionnaire back in the A4 envelop provided, sealed it and returned it to the school admin staff who collated all envelopes for collection. This secured a high response rate. The handling of non-responses depended on the position each individual held. In a few instances, where initial non-responses involved staff in key roles the headteachers decided if it was appropriate to offer individuals a second chance to participate. As an example, the depute head of the third school had been on sick leave during the staff completion period but was offered the opportunity to complete the questionnaire on her return, which she said she was happy to do.

Whilst recognising the benefits and disadvantages of this type of self-completed questionnaire (Bryman, 2004) as hoped, it proved efficient (Robson, 1993) and had a relatively high return rate (Munn and Drever, 1995). In relation to the first school, 29 questionnaires were distributed and 26 were returned. In the second school, 10 questionnaires were distributed and 10 were returned. In the third school, 23 questionnaires were distributed and 21 were returned. Appreciation is given to the fact that not all staff were approached by the headteachers to participate in the survey, particularly in instances where the questionnaire was felt to be inappropriate in relation to the nature of their role or the very part-time character of their remit.

Data from the questionnaires was centrally collated to protect the identity of respondents. A summary of each school’s responses was sent to the respective headteacher for further discussion. Themes and trends from the questionnaire data were followed up in the third headteacher interview. The 360° analysis questionnaire of staff views was designed to offer further insight, identify any similarities and differences between the perceptions of headteachers and their staff, and to encourage headteachers to provide a balanced and accurate view.

Sociometric Analysis
The development of sociometry, a socio-psychology method, is often attributed to Moreno (1934, revised 1953). However, Freeman (1996) identifies six works by others working in educational and developmental psychology as antecedents to Moreno’s work. Scott (2000) discusses how Moreno’s work developed in his
exploration of the relationship between social structures and psychological wellbeing through social configurations, creating the sociogram as an analytical diagram to represent those configurations. Through the work of researchers at Harvard University and more recently, within the Department of Social Anthropology at Manchester University, the term social network analysis (SNA) has become commonly adopted. In this study, the use of the terms sociometric analysis and sociogram link back to my knowledge of the method from my Masters research (Torrance, 1997, 1998 and 2000) and to the software package used in this study (Leweijohann, 2005).

Sociograms provide researchers with the means to visualize flows of information and influence, ‘move[ing] away from an exclusive focus on school principals and other formally designated leaders to include non-positional leaders’ enabling the collection and analysis of data ‘to understand the structure of relationships among organizational members’ and interactions of social influence with a focus on leadership rather than leader (Pitts and Spillane, 2009: 185). As a method, sociograms are well suited to this study since they enable the researcher to ‘identify leaders and isolated individuals, to uncover asymmetry and reciprocity, and to map chains of connection’ (Scott, 2000: 10). Furthermore, through this method, ‘social meaning is actively constructed by group members on the basis of their perceptions and experiences of the contexts in which they act’. Sociometric analysis provides a mixed method approach underpinned by graph theory (Edwards, 2010: 2; Christopoulos, 2011), enabling researchers to explore network structure from an ‘outsider’s perspective’, and processes from an ‘insider’s perspective’, networks being ‘both structure and process at the same time’, avoiding ‘simple categorisation as either quantitative or qualitative phenomena’. Through building upon the early anthropological studies (Edwards, 2010: 4), SNA ‘generates observational, narrative, and visual data on social relations by using ethnography (Trotter 1999), in-depth interviews (Pahl and Spencer 2004), and participatory mapping techniques (Emmel 2008)’. As such, SNA sits well with the other methods used in this study through ‘exploring the “lived experience” of social networks (Emmel and Clark, 2009, 2); what passes through networks (Crow 2004); the spatial embedding of network ties (Clark 2007); and the consequences of network dynamics for inequality in social life (Heath et al., 2009)”’ (Edwards, 2010: 7). The combination of
sociometric analysis with in-depth interview methods and narrative accounts is a good fit (Edwards, 2010).

Within the 360° analysis questionnaire, two questions were incorporated to enable the leadership relationships within the school to be visually mapped using sociograms. For the first item, staff indicated the response most closely matching their experience of the statement, “In this school, staff regularly approach colleagues for advice and support and are confident that they will be given appropriate advice and support”. Staff were provided with space to add a comment underneath their response by way of illustration. For the second item, staff were asked to identify by name any and all colleagues whom they regularly approached for advice and support. They were also asked to indicate the nature of advice and support sought. From that information, sociograms were created for: curricular matters; teaching, learning and/or assessment matters; pupil care, welfare and/or pastoral concerns; personal concerns; current role and/or career development matters; ‘other’ matters.

A copy of the sociograms was sent to the respective school’s headteacher for further discussion. Themes and trends from the sociometric analysis were followed up in the fourth interview. The sociometric analysis was designed to offer further insight, identify any similarities and differences between the perceptions of headteachers and their staff, and to encourage headteachers to provide a balanced and accurate view of a distributed perspective on leadership and management.

7.10 Data Analysis and Presentation
Having weighed up the potential advantages and disadvantages of digitally recording the headteacher interviews (Elliott, 2005; Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Moyles, 2003), the pattern established with each set of interviews was agreed with the respective headteacher. The first interview was not digitally recorded due to the nature of the data generated. This was also in part due to the nature of establishing trust and guarding against the potential effect the presence of equipment may have. It was felt that the benefits of digitally recording subsequent interviews would far outweigh any drawback.
The transcripts from the second, third and fourth interviews ‘allow[ed] for a detailed consideration of what had been said’ (Gubrium and Holstein, 2009: 35). Transcripts also formed part of the efforts to ensure both reliability and informed consent. Particularly in relation to the second interview, recognition (Elliott, 2005: 33) was given to the interviews being ‘understood as a site for the production of meanings’ with the role of the interviewer along with the accounts themselves being important to capture. Riessman (2008: 191) argues that, ‘the precise words spoken or written by narrators strengthens persuasiveness, and allows the investigator (and reader) to examine language – a hallmark of narrative research’. More practical advise related to the quality of the microphone (Jones and Somekh, 2005), buying a recorder with a counter (Goodson and Sikes, 2001) and the labelling of recordings (Atkinson, 1998). I was fortunate in my choice of digital recorder (a Zoom H2 portable recorder) and meticulous in my preparation for each interview.

Having spent two hours transcribing each ten-minute period of the first recorded interview, I bought in secretarial support for the transcription of all subsequent digital recordings. As a result of those measures, good quality interview transcripts were obtained. To balance potential loss of ‘immersion’ in the data, I fine-tuned each transcript whilst listening to the recording. The hand (rather than package) analysis which followed provided extensive opportunity for immersion in the data.

There were different stages to the analysis of the data. In keeping with a grounded approach (Charmaz, 2006: 23), analysis was an iterative process involving continually ‘going back to the data and forward into analysis’. First stage analysis involved the collation and initial presentation of the data. Each of the interviews was transcribed word for word to create a series of transcripts. Responses from each school’s 360° questionnaire were collated to form two versions: the whole staff view; a breakdown of responses into different staff roles. The data generated by the sociometric analysis was used to create sociograms using uncomplicated, free, Apple Mac compatible downloadable software by Lewejohann (2005).

As previously discussed, although only the second interview could be closely described as utilising a narrative or life story method, the conduct of each of the other interviews encouraged the headteachers to ‘open up’ and to provide detailed reflections. This generated a huge amount of ‘rich data’, ‘to get beneath the surface
of social and subjective life’, trawled through repeatedly by hand rather than analysis package, to develop in-depth knowledge of the data, then identify meanings and understandings (Atkinson, 1998) forming key themes or codes for exploration in the case studies (Charmaz, 2006: 14; 13). In so doing, the intention was to make sense of the experiences and perceptions of each headteacher (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) within a constructivist approach (Elliott, 2005).

Having compiled all apposite data, a case record (Durrant and Holden, 2006 drawing on Stenhouse, 1978) was constructed for each case study, similar to Yin’s (2009) conceptualisation of a case study database. Each case record was constructed around the five research questions, the ‘etic issues’ or ‘thick descriptions’ (Stake, 1995: 20 and 2000) underpinning the study. Extracts from the interviews, key findings from the 360° questionnaire data as well as data from the sociometric analysis were drawn from to present a comprehensive picture of each case. The original intention was that through this process, the case studies would be presented. However, rich meanings were lost, leading to the search for a new way of presenting data within which data was used illustratively. This formed the basis for the next stage of analysis within which four key themes, the ‘emic issues’ or ‘research questions revealed by actors’ (Stake, 1995: 20 and 2000), emerged for exploration within each case study chapter. By this means, the path leading to the analysis was clear, ‘the body of evidence from which interpretations [were] derived’ was easily available, ‘enabl[ing] others to return to the evidence so that the case study can be approached critically by other people and verified’ (Durrant and Holden, 2006: 70; Hammersley et al., 2000). In so doing, trustworthiness was enhanced and a more considered depth of analysis reached, recognising that stories ‘are actively and inventively crafted’ (Gubrium and Holstein, 2009: 30).

The final stage involved the pulling together and analysis of findings across the case studies in a separate chapter.

7.11 Conclusion
This chapter presented the rationale behind and detail of the methodology and methods employed in this study. A range of considerations in relation to the research approach was explored. The processes of data gathering, presentation and analysis
were discussed. Approaches were selected in relation to the study’ overall aims in terms of their suitability in addressing the research questions.

The proceeding three chapters present and discuss three discrete case studies. The story contained within each, explores the experiences and perceptions of a headteacher in her early years of headship situating a distributed perspective in her school. It focuses on my efforts to understand and articulate the leadership and management processes utilised by the headteacher. Where relevant, the extent to which leadership and management appears to be distributed is also explored, in relation to the influence the headteacher’s actions have had on school reality as experienced by staff.

Different data sets are drawn from within each case study arising from the four headteacher interviews, the headteacher diaries (where relevant), the staff questionnaires and sociograms. The interviews, designed to elicit flow in the headteachers’ thinking, resulted in expansive narratives. Vignettes from the interviews and diaries exemplifying points made can be found in the appendix sections, and the reader is directed to those sections by way of a coding system such as (third interview vignette (i) - Appendix 2b). The sociograms can be found in the appendix sections and the reader is directed to the appropriate section at the point where each sociogram is referred. Each sociogram contains a key explaining the coding system used to represent staff members and their relationships to each other. It is suggested that the reader briefly familiarises themselves with the appendix material before embarking on the case studies.

Chapter eleven pulls together an analysis of the findings across the three case studies, their implications and limited generality, paying cognisance to the limits of claims to knowledge that it is possible to make.
Chapter Eight: Introduction to the Three Case Studies

8.1 General Introduction
As explained in the preceding methodology and research design chapter, chapters eight, nine and ten take in turn each of the three case studies encompassing this study. The three case study chapters are constructed between a shared introduction and shared conclusion. Each chapter comprises the presentation and discussion of data generated. The proceeding chapter pulls together an analysis of the findings across the three case studies. There follows a final conclusions chapter.

Each case study chapter includes an account of one headteacher’s perspective on and practice of distributed leadership. As described by the first, none of the headteachers perceived their role as ‘being about the heroic leader, about being the charismatic leader’. Rather, their ideology was identified as believing all teachers have a leadership role to play. In the case of the second headteacher, that ideology was extended to include support staff, making explicit reference on numerous occasions to the manner in which she tried to involve them. In the case of the third, that ideology was extended to all staff and pupils contributing to the leadership of the school as she strove to lead in a more democratic manner (second interview vignette (i) - Appendix 4a).

The first headteacher expressed, ‘if I’m serious about distributed leadership then it’s the whole package’, ‘It’s who I am. That may be the SQH actually’. The third headteacher also perceived distributed leadership to be an integral part of her practice. Indeed, her depute joined part of the first and fourth interviews, perhaps indicating the closeness of their working relationship, and frequently confirmed the headteacher’s distributed perspective. The second headteacher perceived distributed leadership to be essential for the functioning of a small school, within which, staff tended to feel more confident in taking on lead roles including those not formally designated as leaders. That ideology was broadly reflected in the data gathered and discussed with each headteacher. However, distributed leadership appeared to be complex and multi-faceted in nature.

The headteachers’ distributed perspective on leadership derived from a personal belief, based on their experience as well as from observation of perceived effective and less effective practice, and the impact they could see of taking forward a
distributed perspective. In the case of the second headteacher, as the lone member of the senior management team (SMT), with no deputies to formally distribute leadership to, a pragmatic consideration was brought to her distributed perspective. Each was well aware of the policy frame and recognised to different degrees a growing expectation placed on headteachers to reflect a distributed perspective in practice. The first headteacher attributed that expectation to outcomes from research as reflected in the school leadership and school improvement literature, as well as to contemporary professional agreements and policy.

8.2 Introduction to the Schools

The first school, of fairly modern construction and situated within a smaller city, had a school role of 360 pupils. Although without a nursery of its own, the neighbouring denominational school’s nursery fed both schools. The school’s FME of around 9% was significantly lower than the national average. The staffing complement reflected the school roll, with a headteacher, two deputies (one in an acting capacity during the study) and a principal teacher, along with 14FTE teachers and a range of support staff. Within the teaching staff, there was one fully qualified Chartered Teacher as well as two well into and one having begun the Chartered Teacher programme. The headteacher herself was an SQH graduate, the acting depute was also an SQH graduate, the second depute had completed the national flexible route to headship programme.

The second school, of traditional construction, was built 150 years ago and extended 100 years ago. The school served two villages with a role of 86 pupils. The school’s free meal entitlement (FME) of around 8% was significantly lower than the national average. The staffing complement reflected the school roll, with a headteacher along with 4 fulltime equivalent (FTE) teachers and 4 learning assistants plus other support staff. The headteacher was herself a SQH graduate and the only staff member with a postgraduate or professional award.

The third school was built in the 1920s of traditional construction and situated on the outskirts of a village in close proximity to a large town. It had a school role of 228 pupils, serving three villages for its mainstream pupils. In addition, there were two nursery classes and specialist provision class for pupils with special educational needs. The school’s FME of around 12% was lower than the national average. The
staffing complement reflected the school roll, with a headteacher and one depute, along with 14FTE teachers and a range of support staff. Within the teaching staff, there was one teacher planning to embark on the Chartered Teacher programme and one teacher embarking on the SQH programme. The headteacher herself was an SQH graduate, having previously graduated with a Masters in Education.

On each of the first visits I arrived a little early and explored the foyer to gain an impression of the school’s ethos and how welcoming it set out to be. I noted the positioning of the school office and the extent of access visitors had to frontline staff. In the case of the first school, a reception desk structure had been erected in the foyer to provide a base for office staff to engage with visitors. In the case of the second school, creative use was made of limited available space. Among the bright and welcoming wall displays of the first school, I was struck by a poster highlighting the extensive leadership roles of staff members, inviting parents to approach staff directly in relation to their specific areas of responsibility. Momentarily, sceptically, I wondered if the poster was for my benefit before making a mental note to explore its purpose at a suitable point. I subsequently discovered it had been purposefully placed there by the headteacher, in order to recognise the contribution staff made, to signal to the school community that each staff member had a lead role for their respective area, and should be approached directly, thereby breaking the habit of going through the headteacher. She saw this as entrusting the staff and role modelling distributed leadership.

8.3 Introduction to the Headteachers
All three headteachers were female. The first, aged 33 years, was already almost two years into her second headship having completed a two year period of headship in a previous school. The second, aged 34 years, was almost three years into her first headship. The third, aged 40 years, was almost three years into her first headship.

Each headteacher was articulate in describing how her understandings of distributed leadership had developed over a number of years. The second headteacher explained that she tended to use the term ‘shared leadership’. As will be discussed later, each provided very clear reflections on different extents to which
characteristics of a distributed perspective on leadership operated across past and present schools.

8.4 Introduction to the Structure of Each Case Study Chapter
Each of the three subsequent chapters takes as its focus the presentation and discussion of data generated from one of the three case studies. Each chapter adheres to the same structure. The data for each case is presented and discussed under four key themes. As discussed in chapter seven, the four key themes, the ‘emic issues’ or ‘research questions revealed by actors’ (Stake, 1995: 20 and 2000) emerged from the three case records (Durrant and Holden, 2006 drawing on Stenhouse, 1978), which were constructed around the five research questions, the ‘etic issues’ or ‘thick descriptions’ (Stake, 1995: 20 and 2000) underpinning the study. In this way, rich meanings were surfaced, with data used illustratively.

As discussed in chapter eleven, a distributed perspective was found to be context specific (Bell, 2007). As such, distinct differences were identified across the three case studies. Perhaps more remarkable, was the emergence of cross cutting themes. The four key themes arising from the case records’ thick descriptions were:

- The central role of the headteacher within a distributed perspective
- The critical role of school context and culture
- Developing the professional identity of staff
- Developing the school as a learning community

Within the headteacher’s distributed perspective, staff played different and distinct roles. What follows is an account of each headteacher’s role. Under the third emic issue, that theme is further explored through the presentation of findings in relation to the professional identity of the headteacher, teaching staff and support staff.
8.5 Emic Issue 1: The Central Role of the Headteacher Within a Distributed Perspective

The first case study headteacher felt herself to be committed to a distributed perspective on leadership and management. Despite that commitment, in practice, she remained central to how distributed leadership operated, in terms of:

- Retaining overall power and influence
- Retaining strategic control over the direction of school improvement
- Providing legitimisation to staff leadership

The central role of the headteacher was a recurring theme throughout the data gathered. It was most visibly striking across the sociograms where although patterns of distributed leadership varied, her dominant role remained constant. The sociogram included below illustrates the headteacher’s role [T1] pertaining to *Curricular Matters*, being even more dominant in other sociograms (see Appendix 2e).

![Figure 8.1 First School Sociogram: Curricular Matters](image)
Within those patterns, the headteacher perceived there to be three factors at play:

- a distinction in the nature of the headteacher and deputes’ leadership roles. Both the head [T1] and one depute [T2] appeared to be working at a strategic level across the school, whereas the second depute [T3] appeared to be generally working within her prescribed department
- strong strategic links between the head [T1] and the two deputes [T2 and T3]
- practical or operational leadership between staff, accessing strategic advice and support from SMT.

The central role of the headteacher led to the retention of overall power and influence. Four key factors emerged from the findings, explored below:

- Distributed leadership appeared to be ‘in the gift of the headteacher’
- Distributed leadership was the result of purposeful planning
- The headteacher set an expectation for how leadership operated
- The headteacher played a key role in modelling, enabling and encouraging a distributed perspective

In that regard the headteacher required to have, in the main, implicit:

- Knowledge and understanding of a distributed perspective
- Knowledge and understanding of the school’s staff

In the initial stages of the research process, the headteacher found it difficult to articulate how the characteristics of a distributed perspective had come about. She described her efforts within her current (second headship) school as being ‘on a journey’ to develop distributed leadership. In her view, the previous head had had a top-down management style, within which little distributed leadership was evident:

> a very, very capable headteacher but just a different style and [staff] weren’t involved in the decision-making process.

Although clear she was not critical of the previous incumbent’s leadership, the headteacher had a perceptible sense of wishing to move away from a top-down hierarchical style, to involve staff in school leadership. Two years on, she felt each member of the teaching staff and some non-teaching staff had a leadership role. I was interested to explore how that transformation had come about.
The facilitative role of the headteacher emerged as a key characteristic underpinning a distributed perspective. She had developed an understanding of that role first by taking forward her SQH school improvement project as a class teacher, receiving both direct and indirect support, enabling her leadership to be effective:

the management team were supporting both my planning but also the actual actions that I was taking with leading that working party.

Reflecting on her second headship, she was able to recognise the facilitative role she played within a distributed perspective (exemplified by the third interview vignette (i) - Appendix 2b).

8.5.1 Distributed Leadership ‘In the Gift of the Headteacher’

Distributed leadership appeared to large extent ‘in the gift of the headteacher’ (second interview vignette (i) - Appendix 2a). The headteacher herself recognized she had paced the rate and extent of leadership distributed. Furthermore, she expressed concern that distributed leadership was very much reliant on her role (second interview vignette (ii) - Appendix 2a).

A hierarchical perspective of distributed leadership pervaded the 360° questionnaire responses (1a - Appendix 2d). The unintended language of hierarchy also surfaced at various points throughout the interviews in relation to the distinction between members of the SMT and staff (‘aimed at us’, ‘we just need to watch that’) and the positioning of the headteacher (‘my staff’; ‘I’m really proud of them, really proud of them’), as illustrated by the following third interview extracts:

…so it’s not just about me distributing leadership, its about other people within the school who have got responsibility distributing it as well and that is, and I don’t mean this in a hierarchical way, but as low down as a teacher or an auxiliary or whatever distributing it even further to their colleagues…

…it’s like teaching a child I suppose, you just respond to the need that they have at the time. So that would be the same with the staff…

Such hierarchy is perhaps an inevitable consequence of the formal staffing structures within Scottish schools rather than the intended consequence of the headteacher’s leadership style, as illustrated by this reflection on staff networks evident within the sociograms:

…what we’re trying to develop within the school isn’t a hierarchical model, but a model where there are opportunities that you can engage in to develop, develop your leadership at the level that you work at. And I can see that, that happening quite, quite nicely there.
However, a distributed perspective located within an established hierarchy may well explain the range of tensions encountered.

Conversely, over the series of four interviews, the headteacher also used a range of inclusive terms such as ‘empowerment’, ‘empowered to support others’, ‘valuing everyone’s contribution’, ‘we’re all in this together’, ‘strong partnership’, ‘a strong mutual respect’, ‘nurture’, ‘a very committed team’, ‘everybody’s responsibility’, ‘everybody’s the same’.

Throughout the interviews, the headteacher discussed her role within a distributed perspective: ‘I see the influence that I’ve had over them coming back to me positively’. Indeed, her influence pervaded throughout. When asked if she could identify her role, she highlighted the importance of modelling behaviours and maintaining an overview role, as well as a management role with respect to quality assurance and timings. Support for individual staff members was also perceived as key (fourth interview vignette (i) - Appendix 2c).

The influence of the headteacher was often implicit, as in the organisation of staffing (discussed under ‘developing enabling structures’). In consultation with both deputes and the teaching staff, she was responsible for the deployment of staff. Therefore, whether intentional or not, development of such positive regard was in the gift of the headteacher or as she recognised herself, ‘actually we’re engineering that’.

8.5.2 Purposeful Planning
Towards the end of the second interview, the headteacher provided clarity of insight into whether the characteristics of a distributed perspective on leadership occurred naturally or were purposefully planned for. It would seem her perspective developed within the specific school context she was working with at any given point in time and that she was purposefully progressing towards her understanding of what distributed leadership should look like in practice (second interview vignette (iii) - Appendix 2a). The context specific nature of distributed leadership is discussed below, under the second emic issue.
Such purposeful planning was ongoing, as evident in the way in which she drew from the data to understand her school further and identify next steps for future development (discussed under ‘learning together for school improvement’). Reflecting towards the end of the fourth interview on the impact that participating in the study had had on her, the headteacher was considering the next steps for the school and her key role in taking those forward (fourth interview vignette (ii) - Appendix 2c).

8.5.3 Setting an Expectation

What strongly emerged from the series of interviews was the manner in which the headteacher had set an expectation of a distributed perspective with her current staff and to an extent with parents. When asked how this had developed over two years to a point where all staff had a leadership role, after a long pause, the headteacher reflected (second interview vignette (iv) - Appendix 2a):

I think an awful lot of it is to do with me being really, really clear about values. It’s about exemplifying it in everything I do.

The headteacher’s belief that all teachers had a leadership role to play was communicated through a public statement to that effect, made through the display of a poster in the entrance foyer illustrating teachers’ leadership roles and remits, as previously discussed. The headteacher felt distributed leadership was embedded in the culture of the school. Indeed, that it was ‘a given’. She identified an example from the 360° questionnaire responses illustrating that staff seeking appointment to the school were already aware there was ‘an expectation that if you work at [current school’s name] you’ve got that type of responsibility’ (third interview vignette (ii) - Appendix 2b). Indeed, she was delighted by that response, perceiving it as a strength.

The need to articulate for staff her own role within a distributed perspective was often highlighted by the headteacher. In that regard, she felt it important to ensure staff were aware of how full her role was, so they did not feel taken advantage of (second interview vignette (v) - Appendix 2a):

I needed to be quite high profile in what I did so they could see all the bits I was doing
8.5.4 Modelling, Enabling and Encouraging

In contrast to delegation, distributed leadership from the headteacher’s perspective commanded substantial time commitment, resulting in a changed rather than reduced headship role and associated workload (second interview vignette (vi) - Appendix 2a). Her role appeared to focus on three key aspects: modelling, enabling and encouraging a distributed perspective.

Modelling Processes

The role of the headteacher and to a lesser extent, the management team, in both articulating and modelling with their staff the processes behind a distributed perspective emerged throughout the study. The headteacher had purposefully begun with modelling the process for the deputes. When reflecting on how she had initially bypassed the deputes in her current second headship school, the headteacher reflected, ‘And again, it was modelling. They watched what I did and they started doing it too’.

Such modelling was apparent in many of the processes the headteacher described. For example, she made explicit the opportunities for the staff and school through the school’s annual self-evaluation process (second interview vignette (vii) - Appendix 2a).

Developing Enabling Processes

While capitalising on perceived opportunities within the school context, making clear her expectations and modelling a distributed perspective on leadership all seemed very important, the headteacher also described a range of processes which had enabled her to begin to develop distributed leadership within her previous and current schools. As an acting Depute, she had learned to take ‘small steps’, ‘little steps’, ‘tiny steps’ with staff (second interview vignette (viii) - Appendix 2a).

Having initially thought developing a distributed perspective had ‘happened naturally’ in her first headship, she went on to explain the processes which had taken place in the early stages (second interview vignette (ix) - Appendix 2a). Although not necessarily planned in detail from the outset, and in her own words developing things naturally, there were a number of deliberate decisions taken.
Similarly, although apparently being a natural process, the headteacher employed a number of deliberate strategies to engage staff in leadership practices within her second headship school. First, she focused on the ‘enthusiastic’ members of staff, harnessing both their enthusiasm and standing with their peers to take things to the next level – ‘the ripple effect’ (second interview vignette (x) - Appendix 2a). It would appear, by starting small, utilising established practices within the school from which new processes were introduced, ‘buy in’ was secured first by staff enthusiastic to take up leadership roles and then by further staff.

Developing Enabling Structures

Around the half way point of the second interview, the headteacher ‘remembered’ two key enabling structures she had employed to develop distributed leadership within her current school which ‘might be relevant’. The first, was to develop an extended management team, with open membership to all staff on a rota basis (second interview vignette (xi) - Appendix 2a). The second was to develop a leadership group, arising from her study trip to Canada (second interview vignette (xii) - Appendix 2a).

Practical actions within organizational structures also appeared to have a facilitative effect on patterns of distributed leadership. For example, the sociograms suggested the placing of teachers in relation to other teachers when classes were assigned brought about professional understandings leading to a positive regard developing through department staff working together (particularly evident with the infant department) and very much through both past and present stage partners building a working relationship together. By purposefully assigning staff, key players had the opportunity to emerge and patterns of influence had the opportunity to develop. Teamwork drawing on the strengths of team members became established but as the headteacher highlighted in the fourth interview, ‘you have to allow that relationship to develop’.

Encouraging

The headteacher recollected how she encouraged and supported individual teachers and support staff at times describing this as, ‘more mentoring than distributed leadership’. Although her encouragement to take on leadership roles seemed clear, such roles seemed aligned to the school’s improvement plan as
explicitly mentioned by three teachers. Only one teacher (implicitly) reported a bottom-up approach in relation to staff assuming responsibility for taking forward new initiatives. What was less clear was the extent to which staff felt supported when they did take on a leadership role. The variation in the comments provided by eight of the teachers to illuminate their responses was significant, three commented on aspects relating to time (1b - Appendix 2d).

In order for the headteacher to exert such influence within a distributed perspective, as discussed under the third emic issue, she appeared to require:

- Knowledge and understanding of a distributed leadership perspective
- Knowledge and understanding of the school’s staff

8.6 Emic Issue 2: The Critical Role of School Context and Culture

The headteacher had a strong sense there was no blueprint for distributed leadership and that school context was fundamentally important across the four schools she drew from. She had a sense of having to start again each time with developing a distributed perspective (third interview vignette (iii) - Appendix 2b; third interview vignette (iv) - Appendix 2b). Nothing could be taken as a given when taking up her second headship. It had taken time to develop a distributed perspective:

> I think if we’d done this [360° questionnaire] six months into post you might have got a very different response.

Having encountered difficulty with taking forward a distributed perspective as an acting DHT, the headteacher reflected, ‘And that was when I realised it was culture – it wasn’t process. So, over a period of about 18 months, I just took little steps with them’. The importance of culture arose again through the accounts of her first headship school (second interview vignette (xiii) - Appendix 2a). Also, when reflecting on the early days in her second headship (second interview vignette (xiv) - Appendix 2a), she described how she had ‘had to develop a culture of openness’ and ‘restart the culture’. The headteacher’s 360° questionnaire responses further emphasised her perception of the importance of school culture.

The headteacher felt that in both her first and second headships, she had inherited traditional structures and cultures and had set about developing a distributed
perspective not previously regarded as the norm in those schools. Four aspects appeared to contribute to the effect of school context and culture:

- Size and structure of school
- Norms of interaction
- Collaborative engagement
- Trust

8.6.1 Size and Structure of School

The size of a school and its associated structure was felt by the headteacher to influence her distributed perspective on leadership. As headteacher of a small primary school, she had appreciated the manner in which staff pulled together (second interview vignette (xv) - Appendix 2a). However, she recognised the fairly unique nature of a smaller school (second interview vignette (xvi) - Appendix 2a). She had felt the need to be mindful not to overload what was a small number of staff who, no matter how willing, could potentially become overwhelmed by unrealistic expectations (second interview vignette (xvii) - Appendix 2a).

Similarly, as headteacher of a large primary school, she had come to appreciate a larger staff did not automatically make it easier to take forward a distributed perspective. In relation to her second headship school, she reflected, ‘it’s been a long journey and it’s been a hard journey at this school’. That, ‘problems in the early days were just about staff’s perceptions about who’s role is it and is this something that I really need to do?’ She identified staff, ‘need to know that I’m not taking advantage’. There was tension in relation to teachers’ perceived rights and conditions of service (second interview vignette (xviii) - Appendix 2a).

On appointment, she had taken care to develop an understanding of her new school context, being well aware of the need to adapt her leadership style in response to the needs of each of the two schools she had been headteacher (second interview vignette (xix) - Appendix 2a).

8.6.2 Norms of Interaction – Leadership Hubs and Networks of Influence

Relationships between staff formed a central feature of distributed leadership, with networks of influence representing norms of interaction. The sociograms (Appendix 2e) in tandem with contextualised information provided by the headteacher, illustrated the significance of those networks and leadership hubs (or ‘key players’,
similar to Moreno’s term ‘star’), as well as emerging patterns of influence. That data appeared to both confirm and contradict views expressed by the headteacher when reflecting on the outcomes of the 360° analysis of staff views (third interview vignette (v) - Appendix 2b).

Networks had developed with specific individuals regularly approached by others for advice and support. There was a flow of influence from key staff forming hubs (a term introduced by the headteacher) in the patterns of influence. The strongest and most influential leadership hubs comprised the headteacher [T1] and both deputes [T2 and T3] who together formed a strong network, remaining constant across the sociograms. That was most evident in the bonds between the headteacher [T1] and first depute [T2]. The remaining hubs varied according to the nature of advice and support sought.

Networks and hubs were not perceived by the headteacher to be based on friendships or simply on designated role. The sociogram relating to ‘personal concerns’ contained far fewer connections than those relating to ‘curricular matters’, ‘teaching, learning and/or assessment matters’ or ‘pupil care, welfare and/or pastoral concerns’, suggesting staff relationships and interactions were focused on professional rather than social aspects. Indeed, the headteacher identified a number of instances where individuals played a key social role within the staff or where individuals had formed longstanding friendships, not reflected in the sociogram leadership relationships (fourth interview vignette (iii) - Appendix 2c).

Patterns of influence emerged in the norms of interaction between staff. Influence appeared to relate to three key factors:

- The nature of positive regard held for a staff member
- Positive regard not being limited to promoted position
- The formation of leadership hubs and networks of influence fit for purpose

**Influence Through Positive Regard**

Denser and more extensive networks and hubs were thought to be based on credibility amongst peers and appreciated specific expertise, regardless of formal position or years of teaching experience (fourth interview vignette (iv) - Appendix 2c). Such positive regard was understood to have been developed through department staff working together (particularly evident with the infant department).
and very much through both past and present stage partners building a working relationship together (fourth interview vignette (v) - Appendix 2c).

Other factors appeared to also come into play: a previous formal NQT mentor and mentee relationships; designated whole school remit; a class teacher being out of class for a period of time to fulfil a whole-school remit. Furthermore, where advice and support was sought in relation to a specific child with additional needs, a pattern emerged between support and teaching staff, and between current and previous teachers. The two full-time Chartered Teachers [T7 and T12] were confirmed as playing a leadership role (T12 slightly more so than T7, attributed by the headteacher to T7 being a ‘weak practitioner’). To the headteacher’s surprise, the Principal Teacher [T17] also played a leadership role.

Surprisingly, the school’s EIS representative [T19] did not appear to play a leadership role, appearing instead to be relatively isolated across the sociograms despite her social connections. The headteacher accorded that lack of influence to T19 being perceived as a ‘weak practitioner’. The full-time LST [T14] with line management responsibility for support staff did not appear to offer a leadership role as support staff did not approach her regularly for support and advice. Indeed, the headteacher referred to ‘the weak leadership of the learning support teacher’, in part explaining the general lack of networking between support staff. However, [T14] did appear to provide support and advice to five class teachers albeit confined to Teaching, Learning and/or Assessment Matters.

Not Limited to Promoted Position
The headteacher seemed clear in her own mind that leadership resided with all staff, not limited to promoted position (fourth interview vignette (vi) - Appendix 2c). During the third interview, she expressed the view: ‘anyone can lead’, that ‘I believe really strongly in distributed leadership’ and that ‘all my teachers have a leadership role and it’s one that I value. They all contribute, it’s not in name only’. Staff concurred with that view, with notable exceptions (1c and 1d - Appendix 2d).

Hubs and Networks Fit for Purpose
A number and range of staff did appear to play a leadership role. Leadership roles and patterns of influence were not static. They changed in relation to what support and advice was being sought. Given staff influence did not appear to be linked to
promoted position per se, and was instead linked to the positive regard an individual was held in, leadership hubs and networks of influence appeared to develop ‘fit for purpose’.

Patterns of influence amongst the staff were complex and distinct depending on context and purpose, seen through the analysis of the sociograms (Appendix 2e). For example, the headteacher made a distinction between what was distributed in relation to curriculum matters depending on whether such matters were perceived as comprising strategic or operational leadership (fourth interview vignette (vii) - Appendix 2c).

8.6.3 Collaborative Engagement

Much of the headteacher’s role within a distributed perspective appeared focused on developing a sense of collaborative engagement with staff. To that end, building teams to encourage staff to pull together, developing staff independence and problem solving abilities, developing ‘a “can do” attitude amongst the staff’, developing a common purpose and staff ownership, responsibility and empowerment, were all key. Such collective effort was engendered by the headteacher in a number of ways as exemplified in her first headship recollections (second interview vignette (xx) - Appendix 2a).

Overall, a sense of collective effort came through the staff responses to the 360° questionnaire in terms of staff in a variety of roles having a leadership position within the school (1e - Appendix 2d); sharing responsibility for school improvement (1f - Appendix 2d); and to a lesser extent, playing an active role in committees and groups charged with making important decisions (1g - Appendix 2d).

8.6.4 Trust

Developing trust between the headteacher and her staff emerged as a key characteristic. This was illustrated in two main ways. First, the headteacher perceived staff had to trust her as an individual. In her first headship, she spoke of staff not feeling secure that the previous headteacher ‘was behind them in case something went wrong. They felt unsupported’. This had led her to model certain behaviours to demonstrate her support of staff (second interview vignette (xxi) - Appendix 2a).
Second, the headteacher perceived staff needed to feel safe in taking on a leadership role through the development of trust (second interview vignette (xxii) - Appendix 2a). She felt it important that staff felt supported when they used their initiative to intervene, even when the outcome proved problematic. Having that level of confidence in each other and in the SMT was thought to enable staff to take risks and to act with a degree of autonomy in decision-making situations. Indeed, in her 360° questionnaire responses, the headteacher ‘agreed’ that staff felt so. However, that level of confidence seemed less secure across the staff within their 360° questionnaire responses (1h - Appendix 2d). What was not clear because of the framing of the question, was whether staff lacked confidence in support in such situations from SMT or colleagues or both.

Effective communication between staff might also reasonably be expected to feature where trusting relationships were established. There was variation in the responses to the extent to which staff communicated effectively with each other in the school (1i - Appendix 2d) and consulted effectively with each other on new initiatives (1j - Appendix 2d).

8.7 Emic Issue 3: Developing the Professional Identity of Staff

What emerged from the headteacher’s reflections, was a sense of developing staff perceptions of their professional identity to assimilate leadership. This seemed to begin with the headteacher’s own professional identity and through her professional development, extend to how she perceived the role of a teacher more generally. She appeared to still be making sense of the role of support staff within a distributed perspective.

This section takes as its focus, the development of three types of professional identity emerging from the data:

- The professional identity of headteachers
- The professional identity of teachers
- The professional identity of support staff
8.7.1 The Professional Identity of Headteachers

Over her career to date, the headteacher had gained a knowledge and understanding of distributed leadership. Such knowledge and understanding appeared to have developed through critical reflection in and on practice. During the second interview, the headteacher expressed, ‘my own professional development has clearly influenced how I am now as a headteacher’. As discussed below, her developing professional identity appeared to have been informed by:

- leadership and management experience to date
- understanding of school improvement practices
- understanding of the literature on school improvement
- understanding of the policy discourse

Informed by Leadership and Management Experience to Date

The headteacher provided detailed narrative accounts illustrating how her knowledge and understanding of distributed leadership was informed by her leadership and management experience. She demonstrated considerable self-awareness, communicating a strong sense of constantly developing her own perspective, skills and abilities within each of the school contexts she had worked. Her understanding of distributed leadership had developed over a number of years, through four key posts. She described herself as having been on a ‘journey’ of development and emphasised the learning she had engaged in. She described a developing leadership style from a simplistic to a much more sophisticated understanding, as exemplified through her reflection on how experience gained through her first headship had made her ‘grow’ (second interview vignette (xxiii) - Appendix 2a).

The headteacher reflected on how experience of working with other leaders and managers across four schools had also shaped her developing perspective (second interview vignette (xxiv) - Appendix 2a), often illustrating her own understanding of distributed leadership through reflecting on and comparing their leadership styles, exploring her own developing style, explaining that she had come to understand how she herself did not want to lead and manage. Indeed, there was a clear sense conveyed that she had pushed established practices and boundaries throughout her career in that endeavour, exemplified through the following sequence.
As a class teacher, she recognised that her understanding of distributed leadership was different to and challenging for members of the senior management team (second interview vignette (xxv) - Appendix 2a). She sought permission to take forward the leadership and management of an SQH school improvement project, explaining the rationale for her role and in turn, receiving their support. The postgraduate study she was undertaking had provided not only the confidence but a legitimised leadership role for her.

On taking up an acting DHT post, her learning journey continued and she developed a clearer understanding of distributed leadership (second interview vignette (xxvi) - Appendix 2a). She encountered another head who although ‘very, very experienced’ was also unaccustomed to a distributed perspective. Again, she challenged existing practices through seeking permission to and then taking forward the leadership and management of a second SQH school improvement project. Through engaging the head in the rationale behind a distributed perspective, she had received support.

On taking up her first headship, the headteacher inherited a staff accustomed to pulling together and lacking trust that if they took on ‘a bit more’ they would be supported should they encounter difficulty. Through role modeling and encouragement of staff to involve themselves in a distributed perspective, the headteacher felt that by the time she moved on, staff were working effectively as a team, taking forward school improvement. She reflected ‘By the time I’d been there a year, I think I’d distributed quite a lot’ (second interview vignette (xxvii) - Appendix 2a).

On taking up her second headship, she was equally clear about the change in leadership and management she wanted to bring about (second interview vignette (xxviii) - Appendix 2a). However, she reflected by comparison, ‘it’s been a long journey and it’s been a hard journey at this school’. This was partly attributed to the large and established staff but also to what she felt was an over-inflated opinion of themselves and of the quality of school provision. Over a two-year period she believed she had purposely worked on and with staff to develop a distributed perspective.
Informed by an Understanding of School Improvement Practices

The headteacher’s knowledge and understanding of distributed leadership was in part informed by an understanding of school improvement practices. She had come to appreciate the general contribution distributed leadership had made to developing a ‘sense of well-being amongst staff’, attributed in part to involvement in a range of leadership roles and to developing a sense of shared purpose (fourth interview vignette (viii) - Appendix 2c). When reflecting on staff responses to the 360° questionnaire, the headteacher expressed the view:

*the vast majority of my staff are saying that distributed leadership is something they like to be involved in and actually bring it on.*

She perceived staff had benefitted from operating a distributed perspective in practice. However, this went further than personal benefit. She felt the confidence of the teachers in her current school had increased. By distributing leadership, staff engaged in the school improvement process and felt empowered by the leadership roles they played, leading them to invest more of themselves, their motivation, their energy and their time, raising their game. In turn, she recognized in relation to her own role: ‘it has freed me up to do a lot more of the capacity building among staff’. She herself felt greater job satisfaction, ‘because I felt we were a team’.

In short, the headteacher acknowledged, ‘I believe I’m getting more out of the teachers now’. Such commitment meant more could be accomplished across the staff team, increasing the pace and depth of change and improvement: ‘teachers who are leading whole school improvement and who are definitely affecting change’. Such change was deep and sustainable (second interview vignette (xxix) - Appendix 2a; fourth interview vignette (ix) - Appendix 2c). She seemed clear in her own mind that she was endeavouring to reach a depth of shared ownership over school improvement, that strategies adopted were intentional, empowering staff and engaging them in collective decision-making and concerted action for school improvement. She explained how she was intentionally ‘nurturing leadership’ and how she had ‘devolved leadership’. She felt in relation to learning, teaching and assessment: ‘staff felt empowered to support others’.

The headteacher’s intentions behind her distributed perspective permeated throughout the interviews: “we’re in this together”, it’s about improvement, it’s about children’. That ideology was expanded upon towards the end of the fourth interview
The purpose behind the headteacher’s efforts was summed up through a reflection on her second headship: ‘It was about getting them to buy in and see the value and see the purpose’; ‘they’re re-engaging. I really believe they’re re-engaging’. She reflected on an indication from staff within the 360° responses that they felt much more involved in the improvement planning process (third interview vignette (vi) - Appendix 2b). Within the 360° questionnaire responses, the headteacher highlighted clear benefits from having more than one leader: ‘Workload is shared. There is also a greater sense of “team”’. However, there was a mixed response from staff to this item, with non-teaching staff apparently less convinced of the benefits (1k - Appendix 2d).

The headteacher had developed an understanding of the potential impact of school improvement practices within a distributed perspective constituting a real learning point in her first headship (second interview vignette (xxx) - Appendix 2a). The approach she had taken was in turn felt to have improved provision for pupils: ‘I think the impact on the children and on the community was very very positive’; ‘the impact was very, was very strong. I hadn’t officially led the group but it had made a significant difference to learning and teaching within the school’; ‘the links that were formed with parents were just phenomenal’.

In relation to her second headship, as the headteacher reflected on staff responses to the 360° questionnaire, her perception of the overriding benefit of a distributed perspective was articulated:

What impact does it have, a positive one, a massive impact, you know. And then there’s the bit about it just making a difference to the children.

Indeed, within the 360° questionnaire responses, a number of staff explicitly identified the impact their leadership role had on the school (1l - Appendix 2d).

The headteacher articulated a clear understanding both of her role and intentions within a distributed perspective (second interview vignette (xxxi) - Appendix 2a). In that regard, she recognised the need to pace the rate of change, for example reflecting during the second interview on ‘giving them time to catch their breath’, ‘embedding it in’ and ‘we’ve probably got to a point that we do need to settle it a bit and then next year we’ll go into sixth gear again’.
Informed by an Understanding of the Literature on School Improvement

The headteacher’s knowledge and understanding of distributed leadership was in part informed by an understanding of the literature on school improvement. The influence of her own postgraduate study was apparent on a number of occasions. She highlighted the impact the SQH and engagement with the leadership literature had had on her learning journey, reflecting in and on practice. Reflecting on her first headship, she recognised that her understanding of distributed leadership was not the same as colleagues’ (second interview vignette (xxxii) - Appendix 2a). The influence the literature on school improvement had had on underpinning her understandings emerged in a number of ways.

Leadership as Distinct from Management

In theory at least, the headteacher made a distinction between leadership and management although in practice, she expressed considerable difficulty distinguishing between the two. She explicitly raised this in the first interview. It repeatedly resurfaced in the second interview: ‘we could argue that was probably more management I suppose’; ‘So I have, see is my role leadership or management actually? I’ve potentially got a management role of the leadership that goes on within the school. So, I have a quality assurance role over what they do’. Throughout the second interview, she explored the differences between, as well as the overlapping nature of leadership and management.

Despite this perceived overlap, on a number of occasions across the interviews, the headteacher used leadership and management to describe distinct processes. Leadership was generally aligned to vision-building (‘think outside the box’), direction setting, deeper level processes, strategic aspects (‘leadership development group’), empowering staff and interpersonal relationships. Management was generally aligned to position (‘management person’, ‘management team’, ‘extended management team’, ‘senior management’), surface level processes, a functional coordination role (‘timings and all that type of stuff’), and operational aspects (‘micro manage’; ‘managerial stuff’). In her 360° questionnaire responses, she exemplified leadership actions as ‘leading developments, sharing ideas, working together to improve’, and management actions as ‘budgets, organisation of events etc, staffing’. She ‘agreed’ there was a clear distinction made within the school between leadership and management.
actions, that staff perceived a clear distinction between leadership roles and management responsibilities.

The headteacher also seemed to perceive leadership in a higher order relationship to management. For example, in the distinction made when describing her efforts in her current, second headship (second interview vignette (xxxiii) - Appendix 2a; second interview vignette (xxxiv) - Appendix 2a). She also made a clear distinction between operational leadership and strategic distributed leadership for instance through reflecting on experiences as an acting DHT (second interview vignette (xxxv) - Appendix 2a) and on experiences in her first headship (second interview vignette (xxxvi) - Appendix 2a).

However, the conceptual confusion or overlapping nature of leadership and management also surfaced at times. For example in the second interview, when reflecting on insights gained recently from interviewing staff who were still working at her first headship school, and how her own understanding had moved on considerably in the intervening years, conceptual confusion was evident:

*What I have experienced from these people, is that, what they perceive as em, distributed leadership and devolved management, however you want to look at it, they still see it as very operational which is where I had to start.*

Distributed Leadership as Distinct from Delegation

The headteacher made a distinction between delegation and distributed leadership (second interview vignette (xxxvii) - Appendix 2a; fourth interview vignette (xi) - Appendix 2c). She was equally clear that, ‘it’s not about me abdicating responsibility or giving them all the jobs that I don’t want to do’ (third interview vignette (vii) - Appendix 2b). Rather, the headteacher felt, ‘you can get a lot more out of people, people are happier, it’s more collaborative, the place grows together when we distribute leadership’. There is a potential tension here in terms of ‘getting more out of people’, returned to later.

*Informed by an Understanding of the Policy Discourse*

The headteacher’s knowledge and understanding of distributed leadership was in part informed by an understanding of the policy discourse. She recognized there was a growing expectation placed on headteachers that they would reflect a distributed perspective in their practice. That expectation was attributed to outcomes
from research as reflected in the school leadership and school improvement literature, as well as to contemporary professional agreements.

Although well aware of distributed leadership being the dominant term in the literature, and explicitly stating she did not feel a pressure from policy makers to distribute leadership, throughout each of the four interviews, the headteacher repeatedly used the term ‘distributive leadership’, the terminology adopted distinctively by HMIE in contemporary policy documents. Indeed, HMIE had recently conducted a ‘good practice visit’ to the school. The focus of the inspection was to look at distributed leadership in relation to CPD and the impact of the McCrone Agreement. The headteacher took the outcomes of that inspection as a clear indication that distributed leadership was indeed operating within the school.

Furthermore, the headteacher interpreted the relatively recent policy stance of the EIS (2008) in this regard as ‘very helpful’, having a positive influence on her staff in helping shape a new professional identity for teachers (third interview vignette (viii) - Appendix 2b).

8.7.2 The Professional Identity of Teachers

Teachers played an essential role within the headteacher’s distributed perspective believing on the whole, teachers had developed a new sense of professional identity. In her view, there had been an increase in their ‘professionalism’ (second interview vignette (xxxviii) - Appendix 2a). Linked to this, that they had the confidence to ‘send memos around the school’ and ‘keep minutes’. She thought teachers felt a sense of empowerment (second interview vignette (xxxix) - Appendix 2a) and associated with that, she observed teachers ‘talk a lot more about learning and teaching’.

The headteacher did, however, recognise there was an indication from teachers within the 360° questionnaire responses that for some, taking on a leadership role was not considered an integral part of their professional identity leading to resentment by other staff (third interview vignette (ix) - Appendix 2b). She recognized that involvement in leadership roles was far from uniform (second interview vignette (xxxx) - Appendix 2a) and was mindful that there was a spectrum of understanding and engagement across the teaching staff. She was also aware
that the spectrum was dependent on specific staff in key leadership roles (second interview vignette (xxxxi) - Appendix 2a). Furthermore, that there were differences in perception with regard to the degree of ownership and empowerment of staff who were actively engaged in leadership roles (third interview vignette (x) - Appendix 2b).

‘Time to lead’ seemed an important consideration for staff. There was an indication throughout the 360° responses (1m - Appendix 2d) that for some teachers, taking on a leadership role was still considered an ‘add on’ or ‘optional extra’ to their teaching remit and as such, required the provision of time, suggesting distributed leadership was not fully embedded in the school’s culture or in teachers’ professional identity (third interview vignette (xi) - Appendix 2b). Issues related to time and ‘perceptions within the profession’ were notable (second interview vignette (xxxxii) - Appendix 2a). Indeed, the issue of time was problematic for the headteacher (third interview vignette (xii) and (xiii) - Appendix 2b).

The headteacher appeared to take considerable effort to get to know her staff and where each teacher was on the leadership spectrum. In so doing, she was able to target encouragement and support, in an effort to engage teachers. What emerged from the data was that:

- Not all teachers seek a leadership role or perceive leadership to be an integral part of their teacher role
- Not all teacher leaders perceive themselves to be leaders
- The leadership exercised by teachers was focused on the curriculum and on teaching, learning and assessment
- The leadership exercised by teachers was not focused on their professional relationship with support staff

*Perceptions of Leadership in Relation to the Role of the Teacher*

Through getting to know her staff and where each teacher was on the leadership engagement spectrum, the headteacher felt able to gauge their stage of readiness to assume leadership roles. She seemed engaged in purposefully developing teachers’ identity to include leadership as an integral part of their professional role although she appreciated that for some teachers, that change might never come (third interview vignette (xiv) - Appendix 2b). That view was reflected in staff
responses to the 360° questionnaire. When asked if all staff were willing to take on a leadership role, the responses varied significantly (1n - Appendix 2d). Even where the headteacher felt there had been a clear change in teachers’ professional identity, she was not certain how established or ‘permanent’ those changes were (second interview vignette (xxxxiii) - Appendix 2a).

Harnessing Teachers with an Understanding of a Distributed Perspective
The headteacher recognised the school was unusual in the number of teachers who had completed or were progressing through postgraduate professional development programmes. She felt that had contributed to staff’s readiness to take on key leadership roles and to their understanding of what lay behind a distributed perspective on leadership. She readily capitalised on such knowledge and understanding, and indeed targeted individual members of staff undertaking postgraduate/structured professional development (second interview vignette (xxxxiv) - Appendix 2a).

Harnessing Enthusiastic Staff
From the beginning, the headteacher was conscious of the need to ‘restart the culture’ in her second headship. In that regard, she judged the readiness of individual members of staff and timed her encouragement accordingly (second interview vignette (xlv) - Appendix 2a). She harnessed the enthusiasm of those individuals to progress distributed leadership at whole staff level. In so doing, she created a ripple effect (second interview vignette (xlvi) - Appendix 2a).

Engaging Less Confident/Enthusiastic Members of Staff
The headteacher also articulated how she involved less enthusiastic or less confident members of staff. For example in the case of a staff member whom the headteacher had identified as being really good at teaching writing and whom she felt could make a wider contribution to the school (second interview vignette (xlvii) - Appendix 2a).

Recognising and Overcoming Potential Barriers
The headteacher recognised soon after taking up her second headship that some staff represented potential barriers to a distributed perspective. Although never discussed with the deputes concerned, she explained how she had ‘bypass[ed] the
deputes to start with’ (second interview vignette (xlvi) - Appendix 2a). She recognised through reflecting on staff responses to the 360° questionnaire ‘resistance’ on the part of a few staff to either engage directly in leadership roles or, to engage with others who had taken on leadership roles. Associated with resistance was staff cynicism (third interview vignette (xv) - Appendix 2b).

**Perceptions of Self as a Teacher Leader**

Developing perceptions of self as a teacher leader appeared linked to developing perceptions of leadership in relation to the role of the teacher. In addition to getting to know her staff and where each teacher was on the leadership engagement spectrum, to gauge their stage of readiness to assume a leadership role, the headteacher appeared to be engaged in efforts to develop the individual and collective identity of teachers to view themselves as teacher leaders. Beyond the public statements that all teachers in the school had a leadership role, that effort appeared to be related to changing the professional identity of teachers. The headteacher explored this area at different points during the third interview. She discussed teacher expectations in relation to the McCrone agreement and her role in managing teachers’ expectations (third interview vignette (xvi) - Appendix 2b). She also identified a distinction between teachers’ perception of being leaders within their classrooms as distinct from their perception of being leaders outwith their classrooms. She suggested (third interview vignette (xvii) - Appendix 2b) the professional identity of teachers within the school had not yet extended to ‘teacher as leader’:

> some of them are still deciding whether they want to be leaders or not because they're grappling with the traditional view they have of a teacher, who is someone who works in just their own classroom with four walls around them, whereas the vast majority of the staff are saying, ‘yeh, I'm quite comfortable being a teacher and a leader’. But there’s one or two who still haven’t got there yet and who potentially might not.

That being the case, the headteacher’s public endorsement and encouragement of teachers to each play a leadership role might at best be described as aspirational and at worst, tokenistic. Indeed, the 360° questionnaire responses (1o - Appendix 2d) highlighted a number of teachers did not perceive themselves to be teacher leaders. Given the number involved, not all teachers perceived by the headteacher to be teacher leaders, perceived themselves to be leaders. Reflecting within the third interview on the number of staff who responded that they did not play a
leadership role, the headteacher felt the data was ‘probably quite accurate’ (third interview vignette (xviii) - Appendix 2b). When asked to elaborate on this in relation to the view expressed in the first interview that all teachers played a leadership role, the headteacher reflected (third interview vignette (xix) - Appendix 2b) that perhaps staff did not perceive the leadership role attributed to them as being ‘that significant’, although she was also committed to her original stance:

So I still believe that all my teachers have a leadership role and it’s one that I value. They all contribute, it’s not in name only.

Perceptions of the Parameters for Teacher Leadership
Although the headteacher felt teachers were empowered to lead, and indeed that view was reflected to an extent in the staff responses (1p - Appendix 2d), the sociometric patterns of influence and variation in staff leadership hubs depended on what aspect of ‘school work’ was the focus. The patterns for both ‘curricular matters’ and ‘teaching, learning and/or assessment matters’ were broadly similar. Thereafter, far fewer teaching staff beyond the headteacher and depute heads appeared to play a leadership role. The extent of teacher influence appeared in the main to be confined to the curriculum, and to teaching, learning and assessment matters.

In this way, teachers’ influence was operational in relation to their engagement in the school’s decision-making processes (1q - Appendix 2d), ability to question established rules, procedures and practices (1r - Appendix 2d), involvement in critically evaluating school policy (1s - Appendix 2d) (which the headteacher did not perceive as an issue: third interview vignette (xx) - Appendix 2b) and feeling a shared sense of accountability (1t - Appendix 2d). Although staff generally felt able to suggest ideas for improving what happens within the school (1u - Appendix 2d), and to propose and implement new ways of doing things across the school (1v - Appendix 2d), they appeared less confident that when they did proposed new ways of doing things, those ideas were then implemented (1w - Appendix 2d). A number of staff appeared to feel involved in ‘small’ decisions but not in ‘big’ decisions taken within the school (third interview vignette (xxi) - Appendix 2b) although there was a sense of this picture still evolving (third interview vignette (xxii) - Appendix 2b). Staff also appeared less secure with using their initiative to intervene when they felt this was necessary in the school (1x - Appendix 2d).
The parameters of teacher leadership appeared linked to developing perceptions of self as a teacher leader, in turn linked to developing perceptions of leadership in relation to the role of the teacher. Such parameters appeared both set by the headteacher in legitimising the nature of leadership roles for teachers, and set by the teachers themselves. Although implied rather than openly stated, there appeared to be a distinction between class teacher perceptions of a leadership role within the semi-private context of the classroom, and the public context outwith the classroom. When taking forward a school leadership role, it seemed necessary to have a designated title, endorsed by the headteacher, to legitimize that role and actions taken within that role. That might in part explain the difference between the headteacher’s perception in the first interview and the teachers’ perceptions in the 360° analysis in terms of how many staff, particularly teachers, played leadership roles within the school, as explored by the headteacher during the third interview (third interview vignette (xxiii) - Appendix 2b).

8.7.3 The Professional Identity of Support Staff
Support Staff also played an essential role within the headteacher’s distributed perspective. She held them in high regard. However, the 360° questionnaire responses along with the headteacher’s reflection on the significance of that data, identified a distinction between the active engagement of teaching and non-teaching
staff within her distributed perspective on leadership. What emerged from the data was:

- lack of a recognised leadership role within the school’s public spaces
- lack of a recognised leadership role within semi-private classroom spaces
- frustration expressed by support staff and their untapped potential

Although school culture is often referred to in the singular, a number of subcultures exist in any school. The headteacher recognised support staff were signalling they felt underutilised and that in developing the culture of the school further, the leadership potential of support staff could be addressed.

*Lack of a Recognised Leadership Role within the School’s Public Spaces*

From an analysis of the sociometric data, support staff very much appeared to lack a recognised leadership role within the public spaces of the school. That being the case, the headteacher’s public endorsement and encouragement of support staff to each play a leadership role again might at best be described as aspirational and at worst, tokenistic. Indeed, the 360° responses (1o - Appendix 2d) highlighted with one exception, that support staff did not perceive themselves to be leaders.

Although the headteacher felt support staff were empowered to lead, and indeed that view was reflected to a much lesser extent in the staff responses (1p - Appendix 2d), the extent of influence of only a minority of support staff appeared almost exclusively to be confined to pupil care, welfare and/or pastoral concerns, and to ‘other’ matters. One member of support staff directly involved in supporting pupil learning [S5] appeared to form a leadership hub, as five teachers (including one of the deputes) regularly approached her for advice and support. The headteacher was able to provide a possible explanation for that trend in that [S5]’s remit included first aid and playground supervision, ‘So she’s sharing a lot of that with people’. However, members of support staff with those same aspects to their remits did not appear to have the same influence.

Overall support staff did not appear to be perceived by colleagues other than the headteacher, as playing a leadership role. They did not appear to have the same access to or ability to create networks and hubs as did the majority of teaching staff.
That finding was problematic for the headteacher who attributed that in part to ‘very weak’ line management by the support for learning teacher:

*So their network of support has let them down. ... It’s interesting because socially they’re very close. They have very good relationships. But they are not discussing their core business.*

**Lack of a Recognised Leadership Role within Semi-Private Classroom Spaces**

Notable through the data gathered, was the lack of leadership perceived to be exercised by support staff within the semi-private spaces of the classroom. There was one partial exception, regarding ‘pupil care, welfare and/or personal concerns’. In that regard, support staff appeared to have a legitimised leadership role, where they had had a long standing relationship with a child who required a high degree of additional support. In that way, support staff might be perceived by the child’s new class teacher as the expert in supporting that child. Individual support staff might therefore be perceived as having a leadership role, albeit a very defined, contained, specific role. The headteacher recognized that as a ‘pattern across the school’ (fourth interview vignette (xiv) - Appendix 2c).

**Frustration Expressed by a Number of Support Staff and their Untapped Potential**

There appeared to be a contradiction between the headteacher’s initial perception of the leadership role played by support staff, and the perception held by teachers and support staff themselves. What emerged strongly from the 360° feedback from staff and the sociometric analysis, was a clear distinction between teaching and non-teaching staff in their active engagement in school leadership. Support staff did not appear to have the same access to or ability to create networks and hubs as did the majority of teaching staff. Moreover, they did not perceive of themselves as leaders and appeared more dissatisfied with the status quo than did the teachers. The headteacher acknowledged overall, ‘the most negative statements come from the non-teaching section within the staff’ (third interview vignette (xxiv) - Appendix 2b).

**8.8 Emic Issue 4: Developing the School as a Learning Community**

The headteacher’s purpose in taking forward a distributed perspective was essentially to enhance the educational provision of pupils through developing the school as a learning community. Her understanding of what she described as the differences between operational and strategic distributed leadership enabled her to move from one to the other over time, gauging the pace of change in relation to the
staff she was working with. Incremental steps were taken to reach increasing depths of distributed leadership both in her first headship (second interview vignette (xlix) - Appendix 2a) and in her second headship. Although she felt significant progress had been made with engaging staff in the leadership of the school, a view broadly endorsed by the staff (1y - Appendix 2d), she did not take the degree to which distributed leadership was embedded for granted. She, was conscious that ‘It’s something that you’re always nurturing’. There did appear to be a culture developing conducive to distributed leadership but this did not appear to be either an established or consistent culture. The headteacher herself recognised during the fourth interview:

but I think all doesn’t involve all within the school yet, because everyone is on a slightly different journey. But, there is an understanding that’s coming through the 360 that actually, it is something that we’re all involved in. It’s not a management thing, it’s not an SMT thing.

Three key aspects emerged from the findings in relation to developing the school as a learning community:

- Developing shared understandings
- Sharing knowledge and expertise
- Learning together for school improvement

### 8.8.1 Developing Shared Understandings

As discussed, the headteacher’s knowledge, understanding and practice of a distributed perspective had been informed over many years by many influences. Her distributed perspective had not adhered to a pre-defined blueprint. Indeed, there was none. Rather, her distributed perspective appeared to encompass an evolving socially constructed reality.

The headteacher was clear she was continually developing her own understanding of how to develop the school as a learning community. Her challenge, was to develop a shared understanding with staff as to their role within a distributed perspective. A number of areas seemed to be in progress. At a fundamental level, an understanding of the distinction between leadership and management still appeared to be developing (1z - Appendix 2d). So too did a distinction between leadership roles and management responsibilities (1zz - Appendix 2d). At a more complex level, after almost two years, despite having made significant progress in
relation to developing shared understandings with her current staff, there was still much to do.

In her own 360° questionnaire responses, the headteacher: ‘strongly agreed’ staff played an active role in committees and groups charged with making important decisions and that there was a sense of shared leadership amongst staff; ‘agreed’ staff consulted effectively with each other on new initiatives, were actively engaged in decision-making processes, regularly suggested ideas for improving what happens in the school, critically evaluated school policy, questioned established rules, procedures and practices, and regularly proposed and implemented new ways of doing things across the school; and ‘agreed’ staff shared responsibility for improving the school and that there was a shared sense of accountability for what goes well and for what goes wrong. However, as has been discussed, that view was overly optimistic when compared with the views of staff.

8.8.2 Sharing Knowledge and Expertise

The headteacher identified how she had personally benefitted from operating a distributed perspective through developing her confidence in earlier roles (‘it made me grow’) through to her current headship role (second interview vignette (I) - Appendix 2a). Staff also appeared to benefit from operating a distributed perspective in practice. Staff were encouraged to share knowledge and expertise in order to develop the school as a learning community. Indeed, the headteacher focussed collegiate time for that purpose, establishing processes and structures to enable that to happen. There were examples, albeit within very specific boundaries, of teachers and to a much lesser extent support staff, playing leadership roles and exerting influence on colleagues, through colleagues perceiving them to have specific knowledge and expertise.

However, what was notable by its absence, was the almost complete lack of reference to staff, be that teaching or support staff, exerting a ‘bottom-up’ influence on school improvement. Staff did not appear to take it upon themselves, nor did they appear to be encouraged, to identify aspects of their own or of school practice which would benefit from improvement, to collaborate with colleagues to formulate a plan for development and to seek the support of the headteacher or deputes to make that
plan a reality. There appeared to be very much a ‘top-down’ approach to developing the school as a learning community.

In order for a distributed perspective on leadership to become established in the practice of staff, one might argue that a shared sense of accountability is a prerequisite. However, this did not appear to be well or consistently established (1t - Appendix 2d).

8.8.3 Learning Together For School Improvement
As discussed at length under the third emic issue, the headteacher had come to appreciate the contribution distributed leadership could make to developing a ‘sense of well-being amongst staff’, engaging staff in school improvement processes, maximizing their commitment and effort. In that way, she sought deep and sustainable change. The headteacher seemed clear in her own mind she was endeavouring to reach a depth of shared ownership over school improvement, that strategies adopted were intentional, to empower staff and to engage them in collective decision-making and concerted action.

The headteacher felt as individuals and collectively, staff were learning how to take forward shared leadership. They learned from getting it right and they learned from getting it wrong. The headteacher had a clarity of insight into a variety of problems and tensions which could be encountered with taking forward a distributed perspective. She was able to reflect on this ‘in the round’, not simply from a headteacher’s perspective. She identified a ‘friction’ between herself and the management team of the school in which she had taken forward her SQH school improvement project as a class teacher. This, she felt, arose as her understanding of distributed leadership ‘was just a different way’ for the management team members and required adjustments to what was considered normal practice in that school. Then, in the school in which she was taking forward her SQH school improvement project as an acting Depute, she experienced tension with and anxiety from some class teachers (second interview vignette (li) - Appendix 2a). Indeed, even after 18 months of taking forward a distributed perspective in that school, there was still a tension with some staff:

‘cos there’s still some that think that it’s a management person’s job to write the improvement plan or to organise a visit, or whatever.
In her first headship, she recognised anxiety amongst the staff: ‘They had felt a feeling of fear related to their previous headteacher’. This seemed related to experiences of unsupported delegation rather than distributed leadership (second interview vignette (lii) - Appendix 2a).

The headteacher coped well with ambiguity. Challenges encountered were perceived by her as opportunities for development. Such commitment to learning together for school improvement underpinned the headteacher’s engagement with the study. She described herself, the staff and the school as being ‘on a journey’ of discovery and development. From the outset, she identified the perceived benefits of engaging with the study. She accepted there might be uncomfortable findings and, when those were discovered, worked hard to understand their implications. She was vigilant to the learning potential for the school as an organisation.

The headteacher articulated that participation in the study had been ‘hugely positive’ and ‘an extremely useful opportunity’ for her, ‘from a personal point of view [she] found it very very helpful too’, ‘very reassuring’. Participation had been ‘like taking stock’, ‘to refocus [her] thinking about where we go next’. Moreover, she found the approaches and methods adopted supportive stating: ‘I really enjoyed it’; ‘I always go away ‘clearer’; ‘it’s like a mini coaching session’; ‘it’s allowed me to clarify [my initial thoughts] even more just through speaking. I liked the openness of it’.

The headteacher highlighted expanding the role of Chartered Teachers, as well as introducing effective line management for support staff as two key areas for development. A third example of a finding the headteacher sought to harness was in relation to the difference in her perspective and that of some staff, in terms of the degree of perceived autonomy in decision-making processes. The headteacher saw potential in developing school culture further (third interview vignette (xxv) - Appendix 2b). Another example, arose through the identification of a difference in her perspective and that of support staff, in terms of their lack of a leadership role and influence. The headteacher identified developing the leadership potential of support staff as a priority and that it was her role to take that forward (third interview vignette (xxvi) and (xxvii) - Appendix 2b; fourth interview vignette (xv) - Appendix 2c).
9.1 **Emic Issue 1:**
The Central Role of the Headteacher Within a Distributed Perspective

The second case study headteacher felt herself to be committed to a distributed perspective on leadership and management. Despite that commitment, in practice, she remained central to how distributed leadership operated, in terms of:

- Retaining overall power and influence
- Retaining strategic control over the direction of school improvement
- Providing legitimisation to staff leadership

The central role of the headteacher was a recurring theme throughout the data gathered. It was most visibly striking across the sociograms where although patterns of distributed leadership varied, her dominant role remained constant. The sociogram included below illustrates the headteacher’s role [T1] pertaining to *Curricular Matters*, being even more dominant in other sociograms (see Appendix 3f).

![Figure 9.1 Second School Sociogram: Curricular Matters](image-url)
The central role of the headteacher led to the retention of overall power and influence. As with the first case study, four key factors emerged from the findings, explored below:

- Distributed leadership appeared to be ‘in the gift of the headteacher’
- Distributed leadership was the result of purposeful planning
- The headteacher set an expectation for how leadership operated
- The headteacher played a key role in modelling, enabling and encouraging a distributed perspective

In that regard the headteacher required to have, in the main, implicit:

- Knowledge and understanding of a distributed perspective
- Knowledge and understanding of the school’s staff

The headteacher had a sense of taking the staff forward from the point at which she had inherited them. The previous head’s top-down management style, incorporated little distributed leadership: ‘the staff here were very much used to the headteacher more or less leading everything’. In contrast, for this headteacher, distributed leadership involved heads recognising the leadership potential of staff and bestowing their confidence on them, empowering them to take forward agreed school improvement priorities. It also involved heads ensuring staff had the practical means, skills and knowledge to take forward a leadership role. Since her appointment, she felt she had purposefully set about empowering teaching and support staff. Almost three years on, she believed each member of staff had a leadership role. I was interested to explore how that transformation had come about. The interview approaches adopted supported the headteacher in recalling processes and approaches taken, as well as any role she had played either directly or indirectly.

9.1.1 Distributed Leadership ‘In the Gift of the Headteacher’

As with the first, the second case study headteacher had very much been at the heart of developing a distributed perspective. Although keen to develop staff confidence in making decisions for themselves both in terms of the ‘silliest little things’ and in coming to her with school improvement ideas, she was still very much at the helm of school leadership. Again, it would appear distributed leadership is, to large extent, ‘in the gift of the headteacher’. This was highlighted particularly in
relation to support staff, who still ran everything past her for permission and encouragement (second interview vignette (i) - Appendix 3a). She recognized a potential disadvantage to the centrality of the headteacher’s role when contemplating the effects if she moved school and an incoming head had a different leadership perspective (second interview vignette (ii) - Appendix 3a).

Within this school, the headteacher was the SMT. One might have anticipated a lack of hierarchy present, due to that flatter management structure. However, a hierarchical perspective pervaded the 360° questionnaire responses (1a - Appendix 3d). The unintended language of hierarchy also surfaced at various points throughout the interviews such as in relation to the positioning of the headteacher: ‘my staff’. However, over the series of four interviews, the headteacher also used a range of inclusive terms such as ‘support’, ‘mutual respect’, ‘sharing of responsibility’, ‘collective responsibility’, ‘empowering people’, ‘ownership’.

Throughout the interviews, the headteacher reflected on her role within a distributed perspective. Support for individual staff members was perceived as key and in that regard, she encouraged, reassured, developed staff confidence, modelled behaviours, scaffolded, facilitated, equipped staff and quality assured their progress. She had worked hard to get to the point where staff were ‘quite confident at making suggestions’ for school improvement. However, that was not sufficient in itself, such as in the example of developing active learning in which she anticipated, ‘I’m going to be driving that more’ (second interview vignette (iii) - Appendix 3a). There was a master plan held in the headteacher’s head, not completely shared with staff. Staff engagement was very much sought, on her terms. She was already planning to determine the pace of change of that priority, wanting staff to continue to approach her to endorse development ideas. She was also the gatekeeper to more formal leadership roles in committees and working groups at school and cluster levels.

The influence of the headteacher was often implicit, as in the organisation of staffing (discussed under ‘developing enabling structures’) where she was responsible for both the recruitment and deployment of staff.
9.1.2 Purposeful Planning
The headteacher considered whether the characteristics of a distributed perspective occurred naturally or were purposely planned for. Her perspective was context specific as she purposely progressed towards her understanding of what distributed leadership should look like in practice (second interview vignette (iv) - Appendix 3a). The context specific nature of distributed leadership is discussed below, under the second emic issue.

The headteacher recognised she had a key role to play within a distributed perspective. She was well aware she asked a great deal of her staff and was vigilant to the effects of this. She had learned the need to pace the rate of change to keep staff on board (second interview vignette (v) - Appendix 3a).

9.1.3 Setting an Expectation
What again emerged from the series of interviews was the manner in which the headteacher had set an expectation of a distributed perspective with the staff and, to an extent pupils and parents (as members of working groups and committees). Reflecting on how this manifested, she described a cumulative effect (fourth interview vignette (i) - Appendix 3c). She was explicit in ‘valuing the work of others’, intentionally ‘providing opportunities’ to develop the leadership capabilities of staff.

Her expectation that all teaching and support staff had a leadership role to play at school and cluster levels was communicated both across and to specific staff. However, she acknowledged leadership was not yet an integral part of every staff member’s professional identity. Regardless, there was an expectation that all staff could lead to differing extents, even in the case of a teacher who would ‘just rather not be leading’ (second interview vignette (vi) - Appendix 3a).

9.1.4 Modelling, Enabling and Encouraging
Rather than focused on a reduction of her workload, a distributed perspective was perceived as a more effective way of working. Indeed, it appeared the headteacher’s workload was not decreased since, having encouraged staff to take on leadership roles, she then worked to facilitate progressing those roles. Her attention was targeted strategically on developing both the individual and collective capabilities of staff, focused on impacting on learner’s experience. Through developing leadership capacity within the school, change was taken forward at a faster rate. Her role
appeared to focus on three key aspects: modelling, enabling and encouraging a distributed perspective.

**Modelling Processes**
The headteacher articulated how she had sought and made the most of opportunities to model the processes intrinsic in a distributed perspective. She had consistently demonstrated through her actions and interactions how all staff could play an active leadership role (second interview vignette (vii) - Appendix 3a). At times, she was explicit in her intentions (third interview vignette (i) - Appendix 3b). Often, modelling was implicit in many of the processes the headteacher described. Regardless, she perceived modelling to be significant (second interview vignette (viii) - Appendix 3a).

**Developing Enabling Processes**
While capitalising on perceived opportunities within the school context, making clear her expectations and modelling a distributed perspective on leadership all seemed very important, the headteacher also describe a range of processes which had enabled her to begin to develop distributed leadership within the school: ‘I think [distributed leadership] is enabled and facilitated by me’. Getting to know each individual staff member ‘very very well’ and what made them ‘tick’ appeared to be paramount. From there, she was able to gauge the level of expectation she could place on them through various ‘interactions’ (third interview vignette (ii) - Appendix 3b).

The headteacher employed a number of deliberate strategies to engage staff in leadership practices. The school’s self-evaluation process appeared key: ‘something that I have been very keen to get embedded into what they do’. That process was ‘ongoing’, leading to ‘people being encouraged to take on leadership roles’. Considerable emphasis was placed on the continuing professional development (CPD) of all staff, with CPD reviews considered paramount. The headteacher engaged individually with staff members to review their professional development needs, areas of interest and how both could be brought together for the good of the individual and school. Leadership development formed a key aspect of the professional review and development process (third interview vignette (iii) -
Appendix 3b; second week’s diary extract (1.1) - Appendix 3e; fourth interview vignette (ii) - Appendix 3c).

**Developing Enabling Structures**

The headteacher utilised a range of school structures to enable a distributed perspective. She had responsibility for the recruitment of staff. A willingness to engage in taking the school forward was a key consideration for her (second interview vignette (ix) - Appendix 3a). She had responsibility for the deployment of teaching staff, as illustrated through her matching of an experienced teacher (who represented a leadership hub) as official mentor to a newly qualified teacher. She, had responsibility for the deployment of support staff and their associated timetabling, providing opportunities for taking forward leadership roles (second interview vignette (x) - Appendix 3a).

Providing staff with time to take forward leadership roles through formal structures was perceived as key. It was the headteacher who ensured regular staff meeting time was embedded into collegiate time arrangements to ensure priorities were given prominence: ‘I have regular meetings and formal and informal meetings with all of the staff’.

**Encouraging**

The headteacher’s knowledge and understanding of each staff member enabled her to be specific in the manner in which she encouraged individuals to engage with her distributed perspective: ‘I think I get the best out of people. I think I’m able to build positive relationships with people’. That was the case for both teaching and support staff. She was vigilant for and capitalised on opportunities to engage staff in leadership roles, as with the enhancement of the support staff role and the development of the probationer mentor leadership role (first week’s diary entry (1.2) - Appendix 3e).

Having identified individuals with a specific interest, the headteacher began a process of guided support within which staff were encouraged to make the most of ‘provided opportunities’ to take forward a leadership role. For some staff, little initial encouragement was needed. For others, much more was required. Where a staff member demonstrated a high level of confidence, they were encouraged to take on
the lead role. Where others were less confident, they were encouraged to take on dual leadership roles. Where others were resistant, they were supported and guided. Leadership roles were aligned to either curriculum development or to specific priorities from the school’s improvement plan. Overall, staff felt supported when they took on a leadership role (1b - Appendix 3d).

In order for the headteacher to exert such influence within a distributed perspective, as discussed under the third emic issue, she appeared to require:

- Knowledge and understanding of a distributed leadership perspective
- Knowledge and understanding of the school’s staff

9.2 Emic Issue 2: The Critical Role of School Context and Culture
The headteacher had a strong sense distributed leadership was context specific across the three schools she had worked. As a teacher and then principal teacher, she had observed the efforts of two headteachers to engage staff in leadership roles and one headteacher’s top-down approach. On appointment, having identified an embedded top-down approach, she set about the process of distributing leadership, changing a dependency culture (second interview vignette (xi) - Appendix 3a).

Having prioritised developing knowledge and understanding of the school context, she engaged with staff both collectively and on an individual basis. She was aware of the impact her arrival had had. However, developing the school’s culture was an ongoing process and had taken almost three years to reach its current point. Four aspects appeared to contribute to the effect of school context and culture:

- Size and structure of school
- Norms of interaction
- Collaborative engagement
- Trust

9.2.1 Size and Structure of School
The headteacher was conscious of the size of the school, having ‘never really worked as part of a really large management team with two or three deputes and two or three principal teachers’. She viewed distributed leadership as essential, relying on staff to take forward school leadership (second interview vignette (xii) - Appendix 3a). As sole SMT member, there appeared to be both immediate and longer term benefits, in relation to the operational (second interview vignette (xiii) -
Appendix 3; fourth interview vignette (iii) - Appendix 3c; (fourth interview vignette (iv) - Appendix 3c) and strategic facets (fourth interview vignette (v) - Appendix 3c) of her role.

The headteacher considered the implications of aspects of a distributed perspective in a larger school, believing 'it may be more of a challenge’ (second interview vignette (xiv) - Appendix 3a). She acknowledged that developing a collective effort was potentially easier within a smaller school where staff were more confident, highlighting, ‘even probationers have leadership roles’. The small school context also meant:

*You can’t be on a group and just sit and be passive because there’s not enough of you to have a person doing that.*

In contrast, she was aware of the potential restrictions in a small school with only one promoted staff member: ‘*you want to offer every child the same opportunities they would have in a larger school environment*’. She placed considerable expectation on staff to make that a reality (second interview vignette (xv) - Appendix 3a) but was mindful not to overburden them (second interview vignette (xvi) - Appendix 3a).

### 9.2.2 Norms of Interaction – Leadership Hubs and Networks of Influence

As with the first case study, relationships between staff formed a central feature of distributed leadership, with networks of influence representing norms of interaction. The sociograms (Appendix 3f), interpreted with the headteacher, highlighted the significance of those networks and leadership hubs as well as emerging patterns of influence. In the main, that data appeared to confirm the views expressed by the headteacher but there were some challenges to that view for example, in relation to curricular matters (fourth interview vignette (vi) - Appendix 3c; fourth interview vignette (vii) - Appendix 3c).

Networks had developed across the staff with specific individuals regularly approached by others for advice and support. This was true for both teaching and support staff. There was a relatively high level of reciprocity (fourth interview vignette (viii) - Appendix 3c).
The headteacher [T1] remained a constant leadership hub across all of the sociograms. Three teacher hubs [T3, T5 and T6] remained constant across the sociograms for curricular matters; teaching, learning and assessment matters; and pupil care, welfare and/or pastoral concerns. All four of the support staff hubs [A1 and S1, S2 and S3] remained constant across the sociograms for pupil care, welfare and/or pastoral concerns; and personal concerns.

Networks and hubs were not perceived by the headteacher to be based on friendships. The sociogram relating to personal concerns contained far fewer connections than those relating to curricular matters, teaching, learning and/or assessment matters or pupil care, welfare and/or pastoral concerns, suggesting staff relationships and interactions were focused on professional rather than social aspects. The headteacher felt that to be appropriate (fourth interview vignette (ix) - Appendix 3c) and without negative connotation:

*It is a very open and really quite a nice atmosphere in the school. There is no tension in the staffroom.*

Patterns of influence emerged in the norms of interaction between staff. Influence appeared to be related to three key factors:

- The nature of positive regard held for a staff member
- Positive regard not being limited to promoted position
- The formation of leadership hubs and networks of influence fit for purpose

**Influence Through Positive Regard**

Networks and hubs were thought to be based on credibility amongst peers and appreciated specific expertise, regardless of years of teaching experience. The probationer [T2] although apparently not as influential as more established teachers, was approached for support and advice marginally more so than T4, an experienced teacher (but only 0.4 FTE). Such positive regard was understood to have developed through a small staff team pulling together to support each other, taking forward school improvement. Through staff working closely with each other across the school, they developed a respect for each other’s areas of experience and expertise.

Other factors appeared to also come into play: formal NQT mentor and mentee relationships; a designated whole school remit. The part-time LST [T7] who met on
a weekly basis with support staff did not appear to offer a leadership role as support staff did not approach her regularly for support and advice. Indeed, the headteacher questioned, ‘maybe that gives an indication that [support staff] don’t see the value in that meeting’.

Not Limited to Promoted Position
Given the headteacher was the only formal leader, leadership was not limited to promoted position. In developing a conducive culture, she felt staff required to perceive their leadership role in progressing school improvement, irrespective of their position within the school (second interview vignette (xvii) - Appendix 3a). Indeed, all staff either strongly agreed or agreed that staff at any stage in their career assumed leadership roles (1c - Appendix 3d) although there was greater variation to the item related to whether or not leaders required an officially designated title within the school (1d - Appendix 3d).

Hubs and Networks Fit for Purpose
Patterns of influence were complex and distinct depending on their purpose, as highlighted in the sociograms (Appendix 3e). The headteacher appeared to play a key leadership role, forming a hub, across each of the sociograms. Many of the relationships encompassing that hub were reciprocal except in relation to current role and/or career development matters and ‘other’, since with only one exception, the flow of influence was one way.

Overall, both teaching and support staff appeared to have good access to support. A number and range of staff appeared to play a leadership role (fourth interview vignette (x) - Appendix 3c). The pattern varied according to the specific aspect on which the sociogram focused, changing in relation to what support and advice was being sought. Notable, was the leadership role T5 and even more so T6 played, at least equal to that of the headteacher in relation to curricular matters; teaching, learning and assessment matters; and care, welfare and pastoral concerns. Also notable, was the leadership role support staff played in relation to care, welfare and pastoral concerns; personal concerns; and to a lesser extent teaching, learning and assessment matters. Key differences emerging in relation to teaching and support staff are explored later.
9.2.3 Collaborative Engagement

The amount of consideration the headteacher had given to developing opportunities for collaborative engagement within the teaching, support and whole staff was striking. Developing a sense of collective effort was a deliberate intention behind which lay a specific range of actions and processes. The key to all those processes was ‘valuing the work of staff’. Vision-building and developing consensus through auditing processes had been key in the initial stages (second interview vignette (xviii) - Appendix 3a), beginning a process taking almost three years to reach its current stage of development (second interview vignette (xix) - Appendix 3a).

As with the first case study’s school, building teams and staff pulling together, developing independence and problem solving amongst staff, developing a ‘can do attitude’, developing a common purpose and staff ownership, responsibility and empowerment were all apparent. Overall, a sense of collective effort came through the staff responses to the 360° questionnaire in terms of staff in a variety of roles having a leadership position within the school (1e - Appendix 3d); sharing responsibility for school improvement (1f - Appendix 3d); and playing an active role in committees and groups charged with making important decisions (1g - Appendix 3d).

9.2.4 Trust

Developing trusting relationships between the headteacher and her staff emerged as a key underpinning characteristic. Having worked with two heads first as a class teacher and then as a principal teacher, she was fulsome in her recollections of having been trusted to take forward aspects of school improvement recalling, for example, how the first head had been ‘happy to let [her] go with that’ and how the second ‘was very happy for [her] to run with that particular priority within [the] school improvement plan’. As a principal teacher when a change in headship had led to staff not being entrusted to take forward school improvement, she had come to appreciate the damaging effects this could have. On taking up her own headship, she recognised staff had been working under a similar leadership style and it would take time to build their confidence within leadership roles.

Building trust was illustrated in two main ways. First, it required the headteacher to have trust in her staff and it required staff to have trust in her (second interview
vignette (xx) - Appendix 3a). Within each of the four diary entries, the headteacher explicitly referred to ‘trust’. She referred to her ‘complete trust that [support staff] will do a super job’. She referred to having left a teacher to lead a collegiate time development with support staff when she herself was out of school, highlighting this as exemplifying ‘the trust and positive working relationships that exist in [the] school’. She referred to not feeling the need to see tangible evidence of collaborative critical reflections on practice amongst staff stating, ‘I believe that this shows the trust that I have in the teachers to support one another in improving teaching and learning, therefore, being leaders in their own and others learning and professional development in the school’. She referred to having intervened in minor rumblings between support and teaching staff over the Christmas performance stating: ‘With regard to the teacher, I have been very subtle in ensuring that the whole staff are aware of my trust in the support staff and that any advice given needs to be given diplomatically’.

Second, the headteacher perceived staff needed to feel safe in taking on a leadership role through the development of trust. She ‘strongly agreed’ that staff felt supported when they used their initiative to intervene, even when the outcome proved problematic, providing a level of confidence enabling them to take risks and to act with a degree of autonomy in decision-making situations. However, that level of confidence seemed less secure across the staff within their 360° questionnaire responses, particularly in relation to teaching staff (1h - Appendix 3d). What was not clear because of the framing of the question, was whether staff lacked confidence in support in such situations from the headteacher or colleagues or both.

If effective communication (1i - Appendix 3d) and consultation (1j - Appendix 3d) between staff might reasonably be expected to feature in established trusting relationships, those aspects were more secure. It should be acknowledged in the view of the headteacher, given the small number of staff involved, the school could only function with good ongoing communication and high levels of cooperation amongst staff.

9.3 Emic Issue 3: Developing the Professional Identity of Staff
What emerged from the headteacher’s reflections, was a sense of developing staff perceptions of their professional identity to encompass a leadership role. As with the
first case study, that seemed to begin with the headteacher’s own professional identity and through her professional development, extend to how she perceived the role of a teacher more generally. As this was her first headship, she was still engaged with much meaning-making in that regard.

This section takes as its focus, the development of three types of professional identity emerging from the data:

- The professional identity of headteachers
- The professional identity of teachers
- The professional identity of support staff

### 9.3.1 The Professional Identity of Headteachers

Through critical reflection in and on practice first as a class teacher, then as a principal teacher and latterly as headteacher, she had gained a knowledge and understanding of a distributed perspective on leadership. As discussed below, her developing professional identity appeared to have been informed by:

- leadership and management experience to date
- understanding of school improvement practices
- understanding of the literature on school improvement
- understanding of the policy discourse

**Informed by Leadership and Management Experience to Date**

The headteacher provided numerous reflections illustrating how her knowledge and understanding of shared/distributed leadership had been informed by her experience. She reflected at depth on herself as a leader and manager throughout the study. She was articulate in describing how her understandings had developed since her earliest years of teaching. She had a strong sense of constantly developing her own perspective, skills and abilities within each of the three school context she had worked in.

The headteacher often illustrated her own understanding of distributed leadership through reflecting on the leadership styles of three previous heads she had worked with. She compared the styles of her first two heads with that of the third. All had had a hand in shaping her perspective, seeking to learn from the distributed perspective of the first two and from the top-down approach of the third. The first two had very
much encouraged her to develop her own leadership style (second interview vignette (xxi) - Appendix 3a; fourth interview vignette (xi) - Appendix 3c).

First, she explored as a class teacher in a small four-class school, the teaching headteacher had recognised her leadership potential. She had 'let her run' with developing an aspect of the then new 5-14 environmental studies curriculum, encouraging her interest and development. In doing so, she had gained ‘a real sense of satisfaction’.

Similarly, as principal teacher in her next school, she had been further encouraged by a headteacher ‘very much keen on distributing and delegating’ to ‘run with [a] particular priority within the school improvement plan’, focusing on the development of teaching a curricular area rather than as previously, the building blocks of the curricular area itself. In so doing, she had had the opportunity to incrementally advance her leadership confidence and capability both in terms of scale of development and in terms of extent of engagement with colleagues. We might refer to that as teacher leadership into project leadership. Both the head and depute had completed the SQH programme, leading to that head being:

*quite familiar with… the language of shared leadership [seeing] the benefits from it. So that was the kind of language that he used with his staff and was very keen to let us take things forward.*

The second case study headteacher had gained much from taking forward her SQH school improvement project both in positive terms and from observing the impact of the appointment of a new headteacher. The contrasting top-down leadership perspective caused her to leave the school (second interview vignette (xxii) - Appendix 3a). Her distributed perspective was far from a romanticised view, having observed and experienced the challenges another headteacher had encountered on appointment when endeavouring to change previous ‘top-down’ practices. Staff ‘had not been used to’ a distributed perspective and some felt the new head ‘was passing the buck a little bit and expecting them to do work that he should be doing ‘cause that’s what he’s paid for’. As such, she appreciated ‘it took a wee while for that message to change’. As a SQH participant, she was ‘probably the one member of staff who was on board with it from the beginning, that way of working’. That experience had helped prepare her for appointment to first headship, and the resistance encountered to her distributed perspective:
Over the past 3 years, a few have resented being asked to do ‘the headteacher’s job’.

She had recognised anxiety amongst the staff attributed to the previous headteacher, ‘not actually really empowering people’, or ‘equipping them with the skills they needed’. That seemed related to experiences of unsupported delegation rather than distributed leadership (second interview vignette (xxiii) - Appendix 3a). She recognised she still needed to provide staff with ‘reassurance during times of decision-making’ to reduce their anxiety. Over the better part of three years, she had set about developing a distributed perspective, inspiring others with confidence to engage in shared leadership (second interview vignette (xxiv) - Appendix 3a).

Informed by an Understanding of School Improvement Practices

The headteacher’s knowledge and understanding of distributed leadership was in part informed by an understanding of school improvement practices. She identified how staff had benefitted from operating a distributed perspective in practice. She felt the confidence of teachers had increased. Staff felt empowered by the leadership roles they played leading them to invest more of themselves, their motivation (‘they got so much out of that’; ‘a real sense of satisfaction’), their energy and their time, raising their game. Support staff, ‘were feeling really good about the levels of responsibility they have been given’. The headteacher reflected upon why that ‘feel good factor’ was important:

I think we have got a really positive working environment here and that people are happy to be at work. Which is, happy to be at school.

The intentions behind her perspective permeated throughout the interviews. For her, distributed leadership was concerned with engaging all staff in school improvement for the benefit of the pupils (second interview vignette (xxv) - Appendix 3a). Ultimately, she had come to appreciate for school improvement initiatives to become embedded in staff practice, staff had to feel a sense of ownership over what initiatives were prioritised and how they were developed (second interview vignette (xxvi) - Appendix 3a; third interview vignette (iv) - Appendix 3b). Such ownership meant that more could be accomplished across the staff team, so the pace, depth and sustainability of change and improvement was increased: ‘I would say most of the time when people are taking things forward it has been successful’.
Indeed, having a sense of ‘ownership’ seemed to form a clear distinguishing feature of distributed leadership. So too was having a sense of ‘empowerment’ to the point where staff felt they could make decisions themselves. The headteacher felt a distributed perspective was, ‘the best way to lead and manage a school’. She perceived this as an ‘ongoing process’. Within the 360° questionnaire responses, she stated in relation to the clear benefits from having more than one leader: ‘With all the demands on everyone, it would be impossible to achieve the improvements and school developments we do without shared/distributed leadership’. Staff in the main also identified clear benefits from having more than one leader (1k - Appendix 3d) and were supportive of one another’s leadership roles (third interview vignette (v) - Appendix 3b).

That approach was in turn felt to have improved provision for pupils within the curriculum, as well as in learning, teaching and assessment matters. All staff were perceived as having a contribution to taking forward school and staff practice within those areas. The headteacher was mindful of the need to guard against staff feeling overwhelmed by change or by workload, recognising the focus for teachers should predominantly be on the quality of learning and teaching within their own classroom.

**Informed by an Understanding of the Literature on School Improvement**

The headteacher’s knowledge and understanding of distributed leadership was in part informed by an understanding of the literature on school improvement. The influence of her postgraduate study was apparent on a number of occasions. She highlighted the ‘big effect’ the SQH and engagement with the leadership literature had had on developing an understanding of the intentionality behind her perspective: ‘I knew that that was the thinking behind shared leadership, distributed leadership and staff having ownership of it’. Reflection on the literature in her practice and the practice of the headteachers she worked with throughout her SQH period had shaped her developing perspective (fourth interview vignette (xii) - Appendix 3c). Through critical reflection she had developed a realistic view of her practice (second interview vignette (xxvii) - Appendix 3a). On appointment to first headship towards the end of SQH, she had, ‘very quickly tak[en] that into practice’, sharing insights gained with the staff. The influence the literature on school improvement had had on underpinning her understandings emerged in a number of ways.
Leadership as Distinct from Management
The headteacher made little explicit reference to the distinction between leadership and management although she had tried to explain the differences to support staff when they had come to discuss this with her during the 360° completion process (third interview vignette (vi) - Appendix 3b). Despite a lack of explicit distinction, she did refer to leadership as incorporating the ‘big ideas’ and ‘vision of what they would like to achieve’, and to:

management being more about the... daily tasks... operational things that happen within the school... just making sure that all boxes are ticked and things are done when they should be... whereas leadership was more of a bigger picture.

Throughout the interviews, when referring to shared/distributed leadership, the headteacher’s intentions were situated within what is largely regarded as the leadership domain. As such, key aspects of leadership included vision-building (‘share the vision’), direction setting (‘our mission statement’, ‘driving force’), deeper level processes, strategic aspects (‘leading change’), empowering staff and interpersonal relationships. Management was generally aligned to promoted position, a functional coordination role (‘management responsibilities’), and operational processes, (‘operational duties’; ‘systems’; ‘structures’). In her 360° questionnaire responses, she exemplified leadership pertaining to,

Particular curricular area developments, committees i.e. eco-schools, health promotion etc. Leadership in particular areas of the school e.g. playground

and management pertaining to,

Operational activities: mentoring, organising, planning, communicating etc, daily, weekly and termly priorities.

Although, in her 360° questionnaire response, she had felt staff did not themselves perceive a distinction between leadership roles and management responsibilities:

I think some staff do not realise that they are leading in different contexts and often only see management responsibilities (more operational duties).

seven of the nine staff members stated they did indeed perceive such a difference.

The headteacher also seemed to perceive leadership in a higher order relationship to management. However, this was implicit throughout the interviews rather than explicitly referred to. For example, management systems were perceived as necessary in order to enable leadership to flourish.
Distributed Leadership as Distinct from Delegation

The headteacher made a clear distinction between delegation and distributed leadership. During her descriptions of leading school improvement prior to headship, she described: ‘within that group we sort of delegated tasks for people to do’; ‘we kind of delegated the tasks amongst the working party’. In response to being asked, ‘So, do you use delegation and distributed leadership as the same term or do you see a difference?’, she was clear she perceived both similarities and clear differences between the processes. In the working party example, delegation was the process: ‘it was a case of just handing out jobs to people’. There were connotations of contrived collegiality in her description, whereby she had purposefully set out to manipulate staff responses (second interview vignette (xxviii) - Appendix 3a). She also made a clear distinction between delegation and distributed leadership when recollecting her observation as a newly appointed headteacher of a staff used to delegated roles rather than empowered authority (third interview vignette (vii) - Appendix 3b).

Informed by an Understanding of the Policy Discourse

The headteacher’s knowledge and understanding of distributed leadership was in part informed by an understanding of the policy discourse. She was well aware of both the policy discourse around distributed leadership, and the school leadership and improvement literature. However, asked directly if she felt there was an expectation placed upon her to distribute leadership, she reflected:

No I don’t. I don’t see it as an expectation. I see it as the best way, I see it as the best way to lead and manage a school.

She felt a distributed perspective was an integral part of her leadership philosophy, shaped by previous experience and by engagement with SQH (fourth interview vignette (xiii) - Appendix 3c). She preferred to use the term shared rather than distributed leadership, not the term used in contemporary policy discourse. It should however be acknowledged that in referring to levels five and six in the previous vignette, she was using the self-evaluation criteria used by HMIE during their school inspection process.
9.3.2 The Professional Identity of Teachers

Teachers played an essential role within the headteacher’s distributed perspective believing on the whole, teachers had developed a new sense of professional identity. In her view, they were much more confident in becoming actively involved in the leadership of the school. She had perceived her role as ‘equip[ping] people with the confidence to, to go and have a go at doing things’. Her intention was that staff would be ‘confident enough to make decisions on their own at times and not always feel that they had to run everything past [her]’. Indeed, developing staff confidence in relation to ‘taking ownership’ was a theme surfacing throughout the study. With this, was the characteristic of getting and keeping everyone ‘on board’, as well as the importance of positive relationships amongst the staff attributed in part to involving them in a range of leadership roles, developing a sense of shared purpose.

The headteacher did not take the degree to which distributed leadership was embedded for granted, appreciating each staff member had a different level of confidence and competence needing to be further developed: ‘it will take time’. Indeed, she acknowledged for one teacher who would ‘rather not be leading’, that was a significant challenge. There was also an indication within the 360° questionnaire responses that for some staff, taking on a leadership role was still considered an add on to their teaching remit, suggesting distributed leadership was not fully embedded in their professional identity.

As with the first case study, ‘time to lead’ seemed an important consideration. The headteacher felt lack of time was a potential barrier to a distributed perspective. As such, she felt teaching and support staff should be given time to take forward leadership roles (second interview vignette (xxix) - Appendix 3a) and found ways to provide time for both (11 - Appendix 3d). Although the second case study headteacher’s view on time for leadership differed from the first, the issue remained that taking on a leadership role was still considered an ‘add on’ or ‘optional extra’ to their teaching remit requiring additional time allocation, rather than being perceived as an integral part of their role.

As with the first case study, the headteacher appeared to make considerable effort to get to know her staff and where each teacher was on the leadership spectrum. In
so doing, she was able to target encouragement and support, in an effort to engage them. What emerged from the data was:

- Not all teachers seek a leadership role or perceive leadership to be an integral part of their teacher role
- Not all teacher leaders perceive themselves to be leaders
- The leadership exercised by teachers was focused on the curriculum, on teaching, learning and assessment, and on pupil care, welfare and/or pastoral concerns
- The leadership exercised by teachers was not focused on their professional relationship with support staff

Perceptions of Leadership in Relation to the Role of the Teacher

The headteacher referred to each teacher as an individual with her own stage of readiness to lead. Having gauged that stage of readiness, encouragement and opportunity was tailored. As with the first case study, she seemed very much engaged in purposefully developing teachers’ identity to include leadership as an integral part of their professional role. However, she identified one teacher in particular for whom it was unlikely that level of assimilation would ever be reached. Regardless, there was an expectation that all teachers would lead. That view was reflected in staff responses to the 360° questionnaire. When asked if all staff were willing to take on a leadership role, all responses were positive (1m - Appendix 3d), yet the headteacher was not sure how established or ‘permanent’ those changes in professional identity were (second interview vignette (xxx) - Appendix 3a).

Harnessing Teachers with an Understanding of a Distributed Perspective

On appointment, the headteacher had recognised none of the staff were confident leaders. She attributed this to the previous head’s leadership style and the lack of opportunity staff had had to feel empowered within leadership roles. She had set about building up the confidence of staff to take the lead, first in a very directed fashion to define parameters and model the process (second interview vignette (xxxi) - Appendix 3a). From there, she built on each teacher’s developing understanding of a distributed perspective.
Harnessing Enthusiastic Staff

The headteacher seemed to harness the enthusiasm of teachers in a number of specific ways. First, she capitalised on the areas of interest individual teachers expressed, making clear the opportunities for them to take forward a leadership role within their area of interest (second interview vignette (xxxii) - Appendix 3a). Second, she was vigilant, observing ‘particular strengths or interests’ of individuals, judging whether each individual was ready for a solo or dual leadership role (second interview vignette (xxxiii) - Appendix 3a). Third, having judged the readiness of individual teachers, she timed her encouragement and differentiated her approach accordingly, as with the case of two teachers encouraged to lead on developing the draft experiences and outcomes of CfE (second interview vignette (xxxiv) - Appendix 3a). Those three approaches had been successful in harnessing enthusiastic staff and building an understanding of distributed leadership within the school’s context.

Engaging Less Confident/Enthusiastic Members of Staff

The headteacher recognised other teachers were at an entirely different stage of readiness for participating in a distributed perspective either because they did not want that role, or found it difficult to lead ‘because of their personalities’. That seemed to be either because an individual lacked self-confidence (second interview vignette (xxxv) - Appendix 3a) or because others found their lack of interpersonal ability difficult to accommodate (second interview vignette (xxxvi) - Appendix 3a). However, rather than exclude such individuals from leadership roles, she adjusted the level of support provided. Consistency appeared to be key in terms of never letting staff down by placing them in situations in which they were ill equipped to succeed. In one instance, where a measured risk had been taken and the role proved too much, the headteacher herself had provided very hands on dual leadership support. She was conscious of the need to recognise the teacher concerned had been given too big a task. She took responsibility, rather than blaming the teacher for not having the ability to lead effectively.

Recognising and Overcoming Potential Barriers

The headteacher recognised soon after taking up her headship, that one teacher represented a potential barrier to a distributed perspective, as she would ‘just rather not be leading’. She identified ‘resistance’ as having been the biggest challenge to
her distributed perspective (second interview vignette (xxxvii) - Appendix 3a). Nevertheless, she felt it important to find ways of differentiating the level of support and direct involvement provided, to ensure a leadership role was nonetheless taken forward.

Perceptions of Self as a Teacher Leader
As with the first case study, developing perceptions of self as a teacher leader appeared linked to developing perceptions of leadership in relation to the role of the teacher. In addition to getting to know her staff and where each teacher was on the leadership engagement spectrum, to gauge their stage of readiness to assume a leadership role, the headteacher also appeared engaged in efforts to develop the individual and collective identity of teachers to view themselves as teacher leaders. This appeared to constitute work in progress.

The 360° questionnaire responses highlighted all but one teacher (who was a probationer) reported playing a leadership role, identifying that role and how they came to have it. Two teachers reported a degree of choice in how they had become engaged in leadership roles: ‘I was asked to be HPS co-ordinator and I went to management regarding my idea for maths bags’; ‘I chose as part of shared leadership’. However, none identified that they themselves had initiated their leadership role arising out of areas of personal interest. That being the case, it would suggest leadership was not fully integrated into the professional identity of teachers. Furthermore, the headteacher wondered whether some teachers were very much focused on developing practice within their classroom and as such, did not fully appreciate the wider leadership role they played. The 360° questionnaire responses went some way to confirming that view, through the frequent use by staff of the term ‘co-ordinator’ which appeared to be used as an officially designated title, to legitimise a wider lead role. That may be linked to the previously discussed emphasis on leadership of learning and teaching within the classroom. Since, in order to legitimately take forward a wider and more public leadership role, it required sanction (third interview vignette (viii) - Appendix 3b). That being the case, it raises questions as to the degree to which distributed leadership was embedded within the school, and the degree of ownership and empowerment of staff engaged in leadership roles.
Perceptions of the Parameters for Teacher Leadership

Although the headteacher ‘strongly agreed’ staff were empowered when they took on a leadership role and indeed that view was reflected in the staff responses (1n - Appendix 3d), the sociometric patterns of influence and variation in staff leadership hubs depended on what aspect of ‘school work’ was the focus. The patterns for ‘curricular matters’, ‘teaching, learning and/or assessment matters’ or ‘pupil care, welfare and/or pastoral concerns’, were broadly similar for teacher roles. Thereafter, far fewer teaching staff beyond the headteacher appeared to play a leadership role.

The extent of teacher influence appeared contained, operational in relation to their engagement, despite feeling actively engaged in the school’s decision-making processes (1o - Appendix 3d); third interview vignette (ix) - Appendix 3b). Staff ability to question established rules, procedures and practices seemed less secure (1p - Appendix 3d). So too was their involvement in critically evaluating school policy (1q - Appendix 3d) (the headteacher did not perceive this as an issue - third interview vignette (x) - Appendix 3b) and feeling a shared sense of accountability (1r - Appendix 3d). In contrast, staff generally felt able to suggest ideas for improving what happened within the school (1s - Appendix 3d), and to propose and implement new ways of doing things across the school (1t - Appendix 3d), but appeared less confident that when they did proposed new ways of doing things, those ideas were then implemented (1u - Appendix 3d).

A number of staff appeared to feel involved with specific and defined leadership roles in particular relation to curriculum matters, learning and teaching, and progressing specific school improvement priorities related to those aspects. That view was confirmed by the headteacher (third interview vignette (xi) - Appendix 3b). Staff appeared less secure with using their initiative to intervene when they felt this was necessary in the school (1v - Appendix 3d).

The parameters of teacher leadership appeared linked to developing perceptions of self as a teacher leader, in turn appearing linked to developing perceptions of leadership in relation to the role of the teacher. Such parameters appeared both set by the headteacher in legitimising the nature of leadership roles for teachers (third interview vignette (xii) - Appendix 3b), and set by the teachers themselves (fourth interview vignette (xiv) - Appendix 3c). Within that second last vignette, there is a
tension surfacing in relation to the degree to which the headteacher was still in control. She referred to teachers being encouraged and asked to take on leadership roles. She also referred to her priority for the staff being focussed on the practice within their classrooms, rather than on whole school or strategic aspects of leadership. Tensions surfaced at other points too. For example, in the questionnaire response relating to staff using their initiative to intervene when they feel this is necessary, it seemed they were still waiting for the headteacher to either act or to sanction their actions.

**Teachers’ Perceptions of Support Staff in Relation to Teacher Leadership**
Teachers’ perceptions of support staff in relation to teacher leadership appeared linked to the parameters of teacher leadership, in turn linked to developing perceptions of self as a teacher leader and to developing perceptions of leadership in relation to the role of the teacher. In brief, as with the first case study, the leadership exercised by teachers was not focused on their professional relationship with support staff. That is to say, teachers did not perceive it as part of their role to develop the leadership capacity of support staff. What differed, however, was the encouragement support staff were given. As the headteacher observed, teachers were ‘*keen to help them to do well in the role that they have in the school*’. In part, this seemed motivated by a recognition of a burden lifted from teachers (1w - Appendix 3d; third interview vignette (xiii) - Appendix 3b). However, as will be seen, that role was defined and at times contested.

**9.3.3 The Professional Identity of Support Staff**
Support staff also played an essential role within the headteacher’s distributed perspective (second interview vignette (xxxviii) - Appendix 3a). She held them in high regard (third interview vignette (xiv) - Appendix 3b). Indeed, across the 360° questionnaire data, their responses were more positive than those of teachers. Support staff directly involved in supporting pupil learning provided the most positive responses of all staff groups. The headteacher recognised the significance of that data, identifying non-teaching staff reported being more actively engaged in her distributed perspective on leadership than teaching staff. What emerged from the data was:

- lack of a recognised leadership role within the school’s public spaces
- lack of a recognised leadership role within semi-private classroom spaces
Unlike the first case study, what did not emerge from the data was a frustration expressed by support staff and an untapped potential. Instead, there appeared a:

- tension between support and teaching staff

The headteacher recognised support staff were very much engaged in leadership roles and they were very positive in their view of those roles. She also recognised teaching staff were signalling that they were less secure with their own leadership role and with the leadership role of support staff. This, she felt, was in part because she had been more explicit with support staff about their leadership role, intentionally developing an enhanced sense of professional identity (third interview vignette (xv) - Appendix 3b). No member of support staff appeared isolated but the degree of connectedness varied across the sociograms.

**Lack of a Recognised Leadership Role within the School’s Public Spaces**

From an analysis of the sociometric data, to an extent, support staff very much appeared to have a recognised leadership role within the public spaces of the school. The headteacher reflected on a distinct difference between the perceptions of support staff and teaching staff. The former being much more explicit about their perceived leadership role within the school, the latter being much more focused on leading and managing learning and teaching. It appeared through the 360° questionnaire responses that support staff very much perceived themselves to have a leadership role within the school’s public spaces.

However, on closer exploration, the leadership role of support staff within the school’s public spaces was generally limited. Predominantly, support staff appeared to have an influencing role with other support staff and with the headteacher. In relation to the sociogram for pupil care, welfare and/or pastoral concerns, each member of the support staff had strong reciprocal relationships with each other. They were able to approach each other regularly for advice and support in that area. To a lesser extent, each member of the support staff had influencing relationships, often reciprocal, with at least two teachers (one of whom was the headteacher). A similar but lesser leadership role was evident in relation to the sociogram for personal concerns. An even lesser but still significant leadership role was evident in relation to the sociogram for teaching, learning and assessment matters.
As with the teachers, the leadership role of support staff appeared ‘gifted’ to them. Only one member of support staff directly involved in supporting pupil learning identified they had initiated their leadership role arising out of their own areas of interest: ‘I had an interest in both these things, and I like to be kept busy so I think probably I asked to do them and everyone else is quite happy with that’.

**Lack of a Recognised Leadership Role within Semi-Private Classroom Spaces**

Notable through the data gathered, was the lack of leadership perceived to be exercised by support staff within the semi-private spaces of the classroom. They appeared to have a much more limited influencing role with teachers. That influence was most evident in relation to the sociograms for pupil care, welfare and pastoral concerns; and personal concerns. With regard to pupil care, welfare and/or pastoral concerns, reciprocity was evident between members of the support staff but not evident between support and teaching staff, with the exception of T3. The headteacher was somewhat surprised about that (fourth interview vignette (xv) - Appendix 3c).

In relation to teaching, learning and/or assessment matters, reciprocity was not evident between members of the support staff. Rather support staff appeared to have an influencing relationship with teachers. That relationship appeared based on their specialist knowledge of individual pupils (fourth interview vignette (xvi) - Appendix 3c). The influence of support staff was least evident in relation to curricular matters, and to current role and/or career development matters. That finding is perhaps most striking since most support staff had a leadership role in specific aspects of the curriculum (fourth interview vignette (xvii) - Appendix 3c).

**Tension Between Support and Teaching Staff**

Unlike the first case study, support staff did not express a frustration in relation to their role, nor did they communicate a sense that their leadership potential remained untapped. Instead, what appeared to be playing itself out, was a redefinition of role, particularly in relation to the teacher role. Whilst the headteacher had been explicit with support staff about the respect she held them in and the contribution they made to school leadership, she had been less explicit with teachers about the leadership role of support staff. Instead, she presented the opportunity support staff could create in terms of freeing up teachings to focus more on their core business.
In most aspects of the sociograms, teachers displayed a significantly stronger leadership role with support staff, than support staff did with teachers. That is to say, teachers were approached much more regularly for advice and support. Moreover, there seemed parameters to the leadership role of support staff which teachers felt uncomfortable outwith. A tension arose when the leadership role of support staff overlapped with that of the teachers’ domain. That tension was illustrated through the sequence of events during the case study period, related to the leadership of the Christmas show.

Historically, the teachers had planned the Christmas show, leading rehearsals with pupils. However, having identified this as being extremely disruptive to learning and teaching over several months and in an effort to provide a professional development opportunity for support staff, the collective decision had been taken that support staff would take on the lead roles for the Christmas show (second interview vignette (xxxix) - Appendix 3a). At first, all progressed smoothly (extracts from the first week’s diary (1.3) - Appendix 3e) until a short time before the show itself, when tensions developed. Those tensions showed themselves in different ways. On a more surface level, teachers appeared to find it difficult not to interfere (extracts from the fourth week’s diary (1.4) - Appendix 3e). On a deeper level, teachers appeared to become very uncomfortable with the public leadership role the support staff had been accorded (third interview vignette (xvi) - Appendix 3b).

There is an indication here that, although teaching and support staff had moved to a point where either could assume leadership roles and could expect the full support of colleagues in that endeavour, that position was still developing and was still vulnerable. Perhaps the nature of public recognition of support staff leadership roles was pushing the boundaries of professional understandings.

9.4 Emic Issue 4: Developing the School as a Learning Community
As with the first case study, the headteacher’s purpose in taking forward a distributed perspective was essentially to enhance the educational provision of pupils. Her efforts surfaced repeatedly in the form of developing a sense of staff ownership over school improvement. In order to achieve that, she was focused on developing the school as a learning community. As such, she sought to harness the
individual potential of staff for the collective benefit of the school (fourth interview vignette (xviii) - Appendix 3c).

She had developed a range of strategies for engaging staff in school improvement processes. She held the overview and gauged the pace of change. Gradually, she had reached a depth of understanding of a distributed perspective, differentiated for each staff member. The progress made in that regard was confirmed by staff who felt very much involved in school leadership (1x - Appendix 3d). There did appear to be a strong culture developing conducive to distributed leadership within which staff were ‘very supportive of one another’. Staff were ‘responsive’ when others had led an initiative and ‘generally speaking… support[ed] one another’. However, that culture did not appear to be fully established or consistent:

I try to develop a culture within the school and I’m trying, I’m still working, we’re still working on it every term…

Three key aspects emerged from the findings in relation to developing the school as a learning community:

- Developing shared understandings
- Sharing knowledge and expertise
- Learning together for school improvement

9.4.1 Developing Shared Understandings

As discussed, the headteacher’s knowledge, understanding and practice of a distributed perspective had been informed over many years by a number of influences. She had a profound understanding of not being ‘the finished article’ in relation to developing her own leadership and management capabilities. Her distributed perspective had not adhered to a pre-defined blueprint. Indeed, there was none. Rather, as with the first case study, her distributed perspective encompassed an evolving socially constructed reality.

The headteacher was clear she was continually progressing her own understanding of how to develop the school as a learning community. She was still learning how to develop a shared understanding with staff as to their role within a distributed perspective. A number of areas seemed to be in progress. At a fundamental level, an understanding of the distinction between leadership and management still appeared to be developing (1y - Appendix 3d). So too did a distinction between
leadership roles and management responsibilities (1z - Appendix 3d). In her own 360° questionnaire responses, the headteacher raised:

I think some staff do not realise that they are leading in different contexts and often only see management responsibilities (more operational duties).

At a more complex level, after almost three years, despite significant progress with developing shared understandings with her current staff, there was still much more to work on.

In her own 360° questionnaire responses, the headteacher: ‘strongly agreed’ staff played an active role in committees and groups charged with making important decisions, staff consulted effectively with each other on new initiatives and regularly suggested ideas for improving what happened in the school, and that there was a shared sense of accountability for what goes well and for what goes wrong; ‘agreed’ there was a sense of shared leadership amongst staff, staff critically evaluated school policy, questioned established rules, procedures and practices, and regularly proposed and implemented new ways of doing things across the school, and that staff shared responsibility for improving the school. However, as has been discussed, there was variation between the headteacher’s view and that of her staff, particularly the teaching staff.

9.4.2 Sharing Knowledge and Expertise

The headteacher identified how she had personally benefitted from working with heads who had operated a distributed perspective. Her own confidence as a leader had grown with the opportunities afforded her. She had felt ‘empowered’ and had gained ‘a real sense of satisfaction’ from those roles. She had learned a great deal about leading collaborative activity. In so doing, she had gained confidence with leadership processes and in her own ability (second interview vignette (xxxx) - Appendix 3a). She had observed impact in the schools she had worked. As a headteacher herself, she could not envisage her role outwith a distributed perspective.

Staff also appeared to benefit from operating a distributed perspective in practice. As with the first case study, there were examples, albeit within specific boundaries, of teachers and support staff, playing leadership roles and exerting influence on
colleagues, through perceived knowledge and expertise. Within those top-down boundaries, the headteacher was trying to stimulate a bottom-up influence on school improvement: ‘We have a shared commitment to improving our school’. Staff were encouraged to develop and then share knowledge and expertise to develop the school as a learning community. Collegiate time focussed on that endeavour, with processes and structures established to enable that to happen. Two main strategies were employed.

The first, involved developing a culture based on self-evaluation. The headteacher had been ‘very keen to get embedded’ self-evaluation which led to ‘powerful’ discussions and ‘suggestions of things that we could start to try’. From that, staff had been encouraged to engage in peer observation to critically reflect on classroom practice. Indeed, in her view, ‘everything [was] based on self-evaluation’ (second interview vignette (xxxxi) - Appendix 3a).

The second, reflected a pattern the headteacher had established with staff within which, assigned leaders gathered a view of how best to take forward an initiative informed by both internal knowledge of the school and external ‘good practice’ (often gathered from cluster school meetings). Those leaders then reported back to a staff meeting at which consensus on next steps was reached (second interview vignette (xxxxii) - Appendix 3a). The most effective examples of school improvement initiatives had been developed with that approach. She attributed much of the success of one initiative to the fact that two teacher leaders had developed the initial knowledge and understanding but, ‘we had done it all together as a staff’. After which, the two leaders were charged by the staff to take forward development tasks which they brought back to staff meetings at regular points (second interview vignette (xxxxiii) - Appendix 3a). The approach taken resulted in ‘everyone [being] on board with the idea’ to the extent that, following an extended period of absence, the headteacher returned to find the initiative ‘had not slipped’ (second interview vignette (xxxxiv) - Appendix 3a).

In order for a distributed perspective on leadership to become established in the practice of staff, one might argue a shared sense of accountability is a prerequisite. However, this did not appear to be fully established (1zz - Appendix 3d).
9.4.3 Learning Together For School Improvement

As discussed at length under the third emic issue, the headteacher had come to appreciate the contribution distributed leadership could make to developing ‘a really positive working environment’ within which staff ‘were feeling really good’ and gained ‘a real sense of satisfaction’ from their leadership roles and engagement in school improvement processes. She felt that was ‘the best way to lead and manage a school’, as change was deep and sustainable. As with the first case study, the headteacher seemed clear in her own mind she was endeavouring to reach a depth of shared ownership over school improvement, that the strategies she adopted were intentional, to empower staff and to engage them in collective decision-making and concerted action (fourth week diary extract (1.5) - Appendix 3e).

Individually and collectively, staff were still learning how to take forward shared leadership. Throughout the interviews, the headteacher returned to the theme of learning through critical reflection in and on her own practice, still finding many aspects of a distributed perspective challenging. Providing appropriate support to staff who found a leadership role problematic was particularly complex (second interview vignette (xlv) - Appendix 3a). She was able to reflect on a range of problems and tensions encountered from a number of perspectives. For example, as an acting Depute taking forward her SQH school improvement project, she experienced tension between her leadership style and that of the incoming headteacher leading to the ‘lowest point’ of her career (second interview vignette (xlvi) - Appendix 3a) and progress with her project being hampered (second interview vignette (xlvii) - Appendix 3a). Reflection on the impact leadership style could have, led to enhanced self-awareness as a newly appointed headteacher. She acknowledged inherent tensions with her own personality (second interview vignette (xlviii) - Appendix 3a), as well as practical concerns associated with taking measured risks with empowering staff to progress school improvement (second interview vignette (xlix)- Appendix 3a) she had worked hard to overcome.

The headteacher thrived on finding solutions to challenges encountered. She learned much from such experiences and encouraged staff to learn from them also. Such commitment to learning together for school improvement underpinned the headteacher’s engagement with the study. Having been in post for almost three years, she considered ‘it may be interesting to reflect on how effective the shared
leadership actually is and not how I think it is!’. Since her appointment, the school had had neither a local authority review nor an HMIE inspection and was due for inspection. The headteacher articulated the perceived benefits of participating in the study in relation to accessing ‘an external view’ to support the school’s self-evaluation in its efforts to continuously improve. She also perceived the timing of the study as being of particular relevance to her own CPD. She acknowledged there might be uncomfortable findings and, when those were uncovered, worked hard to understand their implications. She was alert to the learning potential for the school as an organisation.

The headteacher articulated that participation in the study had been ‘really valuable’ and ‘mutually beneficial’. It had ‘helped [her] to think it through and identify, you know, key things in [her] mind’. The main finding the headteacher sought to harness was in relation to developing school culture further, more specifically, the identification of tensions between teaching and support staff, when support staff took forward a public leadership role. The headteacher identified developing better understandings of the leadership role of support staff as a priority and that it was her role to take that forward (third interview vignette (xvii) - Appendix 3b).
10.1 Emic Issue 1: 
The Central Role of the Headteacher Within a Distributed Perspective

The third case study headteacher felt herself to be committed to a distributed perspective on leadership and management. Despite that commitment, in practice, she remained central to how distributed leadership operated, in terms of:

- Retaining overall power and influence
- Retaining strategic control over the direction of school improvement
- Providing legitimisation to staff leadership

The central role of the headteacher was a recurring theme throughout the data gathered. It was most visibly striking across the sociograms where although patterns of distributed leadership varied, her dominant role remained constant. The sociogram included below illustrates the headteacher’s role [T1] pertaining to Curricular Matters, being even more dominant in other sociograms (see Appendix 4f).

![Figure 10.1 Third School Sociogram: Curricular Matters](image-url)
The central role of the headteacher led to the retention of overall power and influence. As with the first two case studies, four key factors emerged from the findings, explored below:

- Distributed leadership appeared to be ‘in the gift of the headteacher’
- Distributed leadership was the result of purposeful planning
- The headteacher set an expectation for how leadership operated
- The headteacher played a key role in modelling, enabling and encouraging a distributed perspective

In that regard the headteacher required to have, in the main, implicit:

- Knowledge and understanding of a distributed perspective
- Knowledge and understanding of the school’s staff

The headteacher described how she had intentionally set about engaging all staff in leadership roles. In her view, the previous headteacher had had a top-down management style, within which little distributed leadership was evident. Almost three years on, she believed all staff had ‘a leadership role in some way’. She was able to reflect on her role in that transformation. Perhaps more so than the other two case study headteachers, she was able to explore the complexities and tensions inherent in that perspective.

10.1.1 Distributed Leadership ‘In the Gift of the Headteacher’

Again, it would appear distributed leadership was, to large extent, ‘in the gift of the headteacher’. As with the first two, the third case study headteacher had very much been at the heart of developing a distributed perspective, setting the parameters for staff engagement in leadership. She recognized a potential disadvantage to the centrality of the headteacher’s role when contemplating the effects if she moved school and an incoming head had a different leadership perspective, acknowledging a reversal of approach in which staff could ‘go back’ to a top-down leadership style (second interview vignette (ii) - Appendix 4a), potentially damaging support staff (third interview vignette (i) - Appendix 4b).

A hierarchical perspective pervaded the 360° questionnaire responses (1a - Appendix 4d). Staff made a clear distinction between themselves and members of the Senior Management Team (SMT) - ‘the management’ - and between the sphere of influence those in formal and informal leadership positions had (1b - Appendix
4d). The unintended language of hierarchy also surfaced at various points throughout the interviews in relation to the positioning of the headteacher (‘my school’, ‘my staff’, ‘my members of staff’, ‘my younger members of staff’, ‘my newer member of staff’, ‘my valued member of staff’, ‘my support staff’, ‘my support assistants’, ‘my probationer’, ‘little teacher’, ‘this girl’). She talked of instances where staff had ‘given up their power’ and were ‘dominated’ by others. She also talked of the different ways in which staff treated her and the depute, feeling the depute was taken advantage of because she did not have ‘the guts’ to ‘stand up’ for herself because she ‘gets scared’ and needed to be ‘a wee bit more assertive’. The headteacher also used a range of terms related to power and authority, such as ‘manipulation’, ‘control’, ‘devious’ and ‘push their buttons’. Over the series of four interviews, the headteacher also used a range of inclusive terms such as ‘support[ing] each other’, ‘we’re all equals’, trying ‘to treat everybody the way I would like to be treated’, ‘leading in a sort of more democratic way’, ‘it’s collegiate and it’s collective’.

The headteacher and depute formed the SMT. Despite a commitment to a distributed perspective, the head repeatedly recognised: ‘you can’t ignore there’s a hierarchy there, there is’. She raised an inherent contradiction and questioned within a truly distributed perspective whether the headteacher role would become obsolete (third interview vignette (ii) - Appendix 4b). A distributed perspective located within an established hierarchy may well explain the range of tensions encountered. She frequently expressed discomfort with what might be termed contrived collegiality (second interview vignette (iii) - Appendix 4a).

Throughout the interviews, the headteacher discussed her role within a distributed perspective. She perceived her role to be supportive, helping staff to develop within leadership roles, ensuring they were ‘up-skilled’, modelling behaviours, ‘mopping up’ issues encountered. She maintained an overview and management role with respect to quality assurance and timings. She ensured staff had time to lead and had clarity about expectations (second interview vignette (iv) - Appendix 4a). She identified the multifaceted nature of her role (second interview vignette (v) - Appendix 4a), reflecting ‘I could see my influence in it, you know’, offering the analogy:

*I suppose it’s like the queen bee, she does have quite a say in how the hive works, you know [laughed]. Whether she knows it or not.*
The influence of the headteacher was often implicit, as in the scaffolding processes and structures she utilized (discussed below), within which staff could contribute to the leadership of the school and develop professional understandings.

10.1.2 Purposeful Planning
The headteacher considered whether the characteristics of a distributed perspective on leadership occurred naturally or were purposely planned for. She thought it was dependent on coordination by a leader (second interview vignette (vi) - Appendix 4a). Her perspective was context specific as discussed under the second emic issue below.

The headteacher was well aware of the pivotal role she had played within a distributed perspective across the four schools she had worked. As the gatekeeper to opportunities, she judged the stage of readiness of individual staff, tailoring her response, purposely progressing towards a collective understanding of what distributed leadership should look like in practice (second interview vignette (vii) - Appendix 4a).

10.1.3 Setting an Expectation
The headteacher continued to work hard, setting an expectation of distributed leadership with staff, changing the top-down management style previously established. Prior to her appointment, staff had ‘never left the staff meeting without absolutely knowing what it is that the headteacher wanted them to do’, having ‘had a row before, for thinking’. Almost three years on, having encouraged staff to make decisions (third interview vignette (iii) - Appendix 4b) and take risks (second interview vignette (viii) - Appendix 4a), she felt each member of the teaching and non-teaching staff had a leadership role.

Due to a large number of retirals, the staffing context had changed dramatically over the past three years from being ‘a very established staff’. The headteacher appeared to place a different expectation on experienced staff members, more confident in their stage of readiness (third interview vignette (iv) - Appendix 4b; second interview vignette (ix) - Appendix 4a), recognising variations in their leadership capabilities (second interview vignette (x) - Appendix 4a).
The expectation placed on teachers was to focus on the quality of learning and teaching. In retrospect, the headteacher felt that might have constrained the view of staff as to their leadership contribution (third interview vignette (v) - Appendix 4b). The headteacher conveyed a clear expectation support staff would and did play a leadership role, although as discussed elsewhere, such expectations were not necessarily mirrored within classroom practice.

10.1.4 Modelling, Enabling and Encouraging
A distributed perspective was perceived as enabling a more effective use of the headteacher’s time, to focus on strategic aspects of her role and build leadership capacity. Her priority was to positively impact on learner’s experience through engaging staff in change and improvement processes. For this headteacher, what she refused to do became almost as important as what she did, refusing to step in and make decisions when staff struggled to come to consensus. Her role appeared to focus on three key aspects: modelling, enabling and encouraging a distributed perspective.

Modelling Processes
The role of the headteacher and to a lesser extent the depute in modelling the processes behind a distributed perspective emerged throughout the study (second interview vignette (xi) - Appendix 4a; third interview vignette (vi) - Appendix 4b). Such modelling was apparent in many of the processes and structures the headteacher described such as the design brief (second interview vignette (xii) - Appendix 4a) and the staff huddle. What appeared to be key was modelling a consistency of approach, adhering to agreed principles, as with their stance for the first staff huddle (second interview vignette (xiii) - Appendix 4a). The headteacher found it challenging to be involved in collegiate decision-making without staff assuming her presence automatically meant she would make the final decision, as with the example of class allocation (third interview vignette (vii) - Appendix 4b). Through modelling collegiate decision-making, she hoped staff would be able to transfer understandings to different situations.

What was less clear was the extent to which the headteacher had modelled with teachers the processes she was developing with support staff. As such, teachers did not have that level of regard for support staff within the classroom context: “cause they don’t see it”. The headteacher also developed an appreciation that
there could be negative consequences to modelling processes: ‘sometimes you support the bit you don’t want to see by the way you behave’.

**Developing Enabling Processes**

While capitalising on perceived opportunities within the school context, making clear her expectations and modelling a distributed perspective on leadership all seemed very important, the headteacher also described a range of processes which had enabled her to begin to develop distributed leadership within the school. She had begun by developing a joint approach with the established depute, creating shared values and vision (second interview vignette (xiv) - Appendix 4a). Unlike the first case study headteacher, she felt it crucial to first get the depute on board with her perspective which had been successful. The depute was now ‘of one mind’ with her. Next, the headteacher prioritised establishing shared values and vision with the staff. That process provided a point of reference for future discussions in relation to the focus of their efforts and priorities for school improvement.

The school’s CPD review and PRD processes appeared key: ‘trying to move three members of staff on’. The headteacher engaged individually with each staff member to review their professional development needs, areas of interest and how both could be brought together for the good of the individual and school.

**Developing Enabling Structures**

The headteacher was acutely aware of the ‘risk’ and ‘measured risk’ inherent in ‘allowing people’ to lead and ‘letting people have distributed leadership’ and for this reason, saw part of her role as ‘making sure the leader is clear’ without creating a ‘straightjacket’. The headteacher had developed with staff a number of structures enabling her to encourage staff to engage in leadership roles whilst ensuring cohesion within a distributed perspective. She had focused on developing policies in which all staff had a vested interest, starting with the resources policy perceived as safe, functional, non-confrontational and resulting in quick wins (second interview vignette (xv) - Appendix 4a). Having carefully modelled the process of policy development, she moved on to other gradually more challenging policies.

Distributed leadership did not entail staff having full autonomy over what they wished to develop since that would ‘just be chaos’ (second interview vignette (xvi) -
Appendix 4a). Rather, mechanisms such as the school improvement design briefs were in place to retain control, managing the perceived risk of staff taking forward improvement, ensuring they kept within established boundaries (second interview vignette (xvii) - Appendix 4a). As a result, the headteacher had the confidence not to be a member of every working party as she had previously been. Similarly, agreed policies provided staff with the security to make decisions for themselves where the locus fell within their own classrooms, gradually expanding to decisions with a locus across classes.

On a more practical level, providing staff with time to take forward leadership roles through formal structures was also key. The formally negotiated collegiate time agreement was instrumental in providing the structure and time for staff to engage in school improvement. In contrast the voluntary ‘staff huddle’ had been set up by staff to provide time for them to discuss their own priorities (second interview vignette (xviii) - Appendix 4a).

Encouraging
Since appointment, the headteacher felt she had purposefully set about encouraging staff to take forward leadership, placing considerable emphasis on getting to know each individual. That enabled her to be specific in the manner in which she encouraged staff to engage with her distributed perspective, ‘pushing their buttons’. She differentiated support in recognition that there were staff she kept ‘a closer eye on’. Staff reported a mixed response to the degree to which they felt supported within a leadership role (1c - Appendix 4d).

On a number of occasions, she raised a concern with how much distributed leadership was about the manipulation of staff (second interview vignette (xix) - Appendix 4a). Indeed, over the series of four interviews, she used a range of terms related to power and authority, such as ‘manipulation’, ‘control’ and ‘devious’ (second interview vignette (xx) - Appendix 4a). In contrast, she saw her role as ‘giving them confidence but they know you’re there if, if they need you’.

In order for the headteacher to exert such influence within a distributed perspective, as discussed under the third emic issue, she appeared to require:

- Knowledge and understanding of a distributed leadership perspective
• Knowledge and understanding of the school’s staff

10.2 Emic Issue 2: The Critical Role of School Context and Culture
The headteacher had a strong sense school context was fundamentally important. Within each of the four schools she had played a leadership role, she had a sense of beginning afresh the development of a distributed perspective. As a depute, having experienced top-down headship she reflected, ‘I think that the headteacher’s role is you kind of set the ethos for that’. On appointment to headship, she inherited staff with little understanding of the leadership role they could play (third interview vignette (viii) - Appendix 4b).

Recognising the significance of school context, the headteacher began where the staff were at, setting about developing understandings collectively and individually. In the early days, staff had been frustratingly dependent on her to make every decision (second interview vignette (xxi) - Appendix 4a). Establishing ‘a shared set of values’, ‘shared understanding’ and ‘shared view’, ‘then trying to get everybody to work towards it’ were prioritised. That was only the beginning of a process taking the best part of three years to develop into a shared culture. Despite that shift, she acknowledged each newly appointed staff member required initiation into its shared culture (second interview vignette (xxii) - Appendix 4a). Four aspects appeared to contribute to the effect of school context and culture:

• Size and structure of school
• Norms of interaction
• Collaborative engagement
• Trust

10.2.1 Size and Structure of School
The headteacher recognised the specific size and structure of the school in relation to its nursery and specialist provision classes, resulting in staff within those settings having specific leadership roles. There were no other promoted posts outwith those of the headteacher and depute meaning despite its size, a flatter management structure was in place than might be regarded the norm.

10.2.2 Norms of Interaction – Leadership Hubs and Networks of Influence
As with the first two case studies, relationships between staff formed a central feature of distributed leadership, networks of influence representing norms of
interaction. The sociograms (Appendix 4f), interpreted with the headteacher, highlighted the significance of those networks and leadership hubs (or 'key players') as well as emerging patterns of influence. In the main, data appeared to confirm the views expressed by the headteacher although there were some 'quite surprising' challenges to that view, as identified during the fourth interview which the depute joined. For example, 'some people looked quite isolated'. In relation to curricular matters, there were a number of surprises (fourth interview vignette (i) - Appendix 4c; fourth interview vignette (ii) - Appendix 4c; fourth interview vignette (iii) - Appendix 4c; fourth interview vignette (iv) - Appendix 4c; fourth interview vignette (v) - Appendix 4c).

The apparent isolation of T6 across the sociograms was unexpected, constituting a theme returned to throughout the interviews and headteacher diary (second week’s diary extract (1.1) - Appendix 4e). T6 had previously been identified by both the HT and DHT as a leader within the school and indeed, had been encouraged to go forward into SQH. It would appear that despite official recognition of a leadership role, staff did not perceive T6 to merit that role.

Networks had developed across the staff with specific individuals regularly approached by others for advice and support. This was much more in evidence for teaching than support staff. There was a relatively low level of reciprocity across the sociograms. Notable exceptions to this, were:

- the reciprocal relationship between the headteacher [T1] and depute [T2];
- the reciprocal relationships between three members [T3, T14 and S1] and to a lesser degree, a fourth member [S6] of the specialist provision class: ‘that shows a nice little team’.

The headteacher [T1] and to a differing and lesser extent the depute [T2] remained constant leadership hubs across the sociograms, although there appeared a distinction in the nature of those roles. The head [T1] and the depute [T2] formed a strong partnership and appeared to be working at a strategic level across the school. However, with the exception of the sociogram related to ‘other’ matters, the headteacher formed more of a hub across the staff for curricula matters, and much more of a hub for the other sociogram areas (that discussion was prematurely ended when the depute joined the fourth interview shortly after it commenced).
Three members of the specialist provision class [T3, T14 and S1] also represented hubs remaining relatively constant across the sociograms, with [S6] forming a hub for the sociogram related to current role and/or career development matters. [T13] formed a teacher hub remaining constant across the sociograms for curricular matters; teaching, learning and assessment matters; pupil care, welfare and pastoral concerns; and personal concerns. [T18] formed a teacher hub remaining constant across the sociograms for curricular matters; teaching, learning and assessment matters; personal concerns; and ‘other’. [T10] formed a teacher hub remaining constant across the sociograms for curricular matters; teaching, learning and assessment matters; and personal concerns.

Networks and hubs were not perceived by the headteacher or depute to be based on friendships (fourth interview vignette (vi) - Appendix 4c). The sociogram relating to ‘personal concerns’ contained fewer connections than those relating to ‘curricular matters’, ‘teaching, learning and/or assessment matters’ or ‘pupil care, welfare and/or pastoral concerns’, suggesting staff relationships and interactions were focused on professional rather than social aspects – although not as marked as it had been for the other case studies. Indeed, friendships were not deemed important for effective working relationships: ‘the professional relationships are really quite good in the school generally’. Rather, ‘mutual respect’ was thought more important.

Patterns of influence emerged in the norms of interaction between staff. Influence appeared to be related to three key factors:

- The nature of positive regard held for a staff member
- Positive regard not being limited to promoted position
- The formation of leadership hubs and networks of influence fit for purpose

**Influence Through Positive Regard**

Networks and hubs were thought to be based on credibility amongst peers and appreciated expertise in relation to a specific aspect, regardless of years of teaching experience. In specific instances longevity could also be a contributing factor such as with [T10]. However, more often, longevity and high regard were coupled, such as with [T18] described by the headteacher as ‘actually very knowledgeable’ and with [T7], ‘a very able teacher. Very, very gifted’.
Such positive regard was understood to have been developed through department staff working together (particularly evident with the specialist provision class and the infant department) and very much through both past and present stage partners building a working relationship and respect for each other’s areas of experience and expertise (fourth interview vignette (vii) - Appendix 4c). The headteacher perceived the nursery class also provided the context within which distributed leadership had developed well (unconfirmed due to the singular 360° response, thought to have been completed as a team, representing a shared view).

Other factors such as a previous formal NQT mentor and mentee relationships, a designated whole school remit, a class teacher being out of class for a period of time to fulfil a whole school remit also appeared to come into play. Where advice and support was sought in relation to a specific child with additional needs, a pattern emerged between support and teaching staff, and between current and previous teachers. [T4] appeared to play a leadership role, thought in part due to her EIS representative role and perceived expertise in all matters ICT. The class teacher [T13] internally seconded to a learning support role for the past year appeared to have much more influence than the long standing learning support teacher [T19] or Business Manager with line management responsibility for support staff, which surprised the headteacher (fourth interview vignette (viii) - Appendix 4c). That may in part explain the general lack of networking between support staff, with the exception of ‘personal concern’.

*Not Limited to Promoted Position*

Given the headteacher and depute were the only formal leaders, leadership was not limited to promoted position. The headteacher described how she distributed leadership to a range of staff not formally designated as leaders, whether teaching or support staff, although she generally had a higher regard for more experienced staff. Although she agreed staff at any stage in their career assumed leadership roles, that was at odds with the view of a significant number of staff (1d - Appendix 4d). However, most agreed that leaders did not necessarily have an officially designated title (1e - Appendix 4d).
Hubs and Networks Fit for Purpose

Patterns of influence were complex and distinct depending on their purpose, as highlighted in the sociograms (Appendix 4f). Two of the hubs remained constant across the sociograms – the headteacher [T1] and the depute [T2] – whilst the remaining hubs varied according to the nature of advice and support sought.

A particular network was identified in relation to staff working within the specialist provision class within which, influential relationships were most often reciprocated. The headteacher identified other networks developed across the staff with specific individuals regularly approached by others for advice and support, forming hubs in the patterns of influence. Those staff were not necessarily those which the headteacher or depute would have identified as key leaders. Equally, those which the headteacher and depute would have identified did not necessarily form leadership hubs. Although a number and range of staff appeared to play a leadership role, there appeared a relatively high level of isolated staff and staff not well connected to networks of influence. As will be explore later, on the whole, support staff did not appear to have the same access to or ability to create networks and hubs as did the majority of teaching staff.

10.2.3 Collaborative Engagement

From the time she was appointed, the headteacher had focused considerable effort on developing the collaborative engagement of staff, reaching a ‘shared understanding’. Distributed leadership was seen as, ‘people carrying out activities together that are improving the community on agreed areas’ (second interview vignette (xxiii) - Appendix 4a). A range of carefully designed opportunities for collaborative engagement was purposefully engendered with the teaching, support and whole staff. The resources policy had been developed first, ‘cause everybody got involved’. Furthermore, it provided a mechanism for the headteacher to become part of the established ‘us’: ‘they were already a community but it made me part of them’.

As with the first two case studies, building teams and staff pulling together, developing confidence and the ability of staff to ‘make decisions’, to be ‘more assertive’, developing a common purpose and staff ownership leading to taking more shared responsibility were all evident. The headteacher perceived autonomy
and collective effort sitting side by side within a distributed perspective (second interview vignette (xxiv) - Appendix 4a).

Overall, a sense of collective effort came through the staff responses to the 360° questionnaire in terms of staff sharing responsibility for improving the school (1f - Appendix 4d), and staff playing an active role in committees and groups charged with making important decisions (1g - Appendix 4d), although there was less consensus as to the extent to which staff in a variety of roles had a leadership position within the school (1h - Appendix 4d).

10.2.4 Trust
Developing a bond of trust between the headteacher and her staff again emerged as a key characteristic of distributed leadership: ‘they trust me’. This was illustrated in two main ways. First, the headteacher perceived staff had to trust her as an individual. As an acting depute, she developed a sense of the importance of building trust, when working with a difficult staff member:

*by getting her on side, her followers were then more trusting towards me. It wasn't a battle. I didn't have the battles the headteacher had.*

Second, the headteacher perceived she had to be able to trust the staff as individuals before she could be sure they were ready for significant leadership roles. On appointment as depute, that approach had been modelled for her, as she negotiated her role with the head:

*I suppose she had built trust in me. It took me a while. And then I suddenly thought ‘actually I am getting to do stuff here without too much of a problem’.*

The headteacher perceived a ‘risk’ in trusting staff and as such, leadership roles and opportunities were dependent on the degree to which she could trust staff with the responsibility. With some staff, she was more guarded, either at an operational (second interview vignette (xxv) - Appendix 4a) or more strategic level (second interview vignette (xxvi) - Appendix 4a). Regardless, the headteacher managed the perceived risk.

The headteacher appeared to feel a sense of discomfort with the discourse around trust, coming back to explore this area throughout the second interview perhaps in an effort to rationalise her own perspective (second interview vignette (xxvii) - Appendix 4a). There was an intrinsic contradiction in relation to the headteacher’s
understanding of risk-taking since she recognised that members of staff were required to take risks in assuming leadership roles (second interview vignette (xxviii) - Appendix 4a). That contradiction was reinforced in her 360° questionnaire responses when she ‘agreed’ staff were supported when using their initiative to intervene, even when the outcome proved problematic. The level of confidence of staff seemed less secure within their responses, particularly in relation to teaching staff (1i - Appendix 4d). What was not clear because of the framing of the question, was whether staff lacked confidence in support in such situations from the headteacher, the depute, colleagues or a combination.

If effective communication (1j - Appendix 4d) and consultation (1k - Appendix 4d) between staff might reasonably be expected to feature in established trusting relationships, those aspects were not fully secure. The headteacher reflected on what she perceived to be an indication that teaching staff did not always communicate and consult effectively with support staff (third interview vignette (ix) - Appendix 4b).

10.3 Emic Issue 3: Developing the Professional Identity of Staff
What emerged from the headteacher’s reflections, was a sense of developing staff perceptions of their professional identity to encompass a leadership role. As with the first two case studies, that seemed to begin with the headteacher’s own professional identity and through her professional development, extend to how she perceived the role of a teacher more generally. Through articulating her thoughts, she gained a new clarity of perspective.

This section takes as its focus, the development of three types of professional identity emerging from the data:
• The professional identity of headteachers
• The professional identity of teachers
• The professional identity of support staff

10.3.1 The Professional Identity of Headteachers
Through critical reflection in and on practice first as a class teacher, then as an acting depute, depute and latterly headteacher, she had gained a knowledge and
understanding of a distributed perspective. As discussed below, her developing professional identity appeared to have been informed by:

- leadership and management experience to date
- understanding of school improvement practices
- understanding of the literature on school improvement
- understanding of the policy discourse

**Informed by Leadership and Management Experience to Date**

The headteacher provided various reflections illustrating how her knowledge and understanding of distributed leadership had been informed by her experience. She was candid in reflecting on herself as a leader and manager, adopting a critical position on her practice, leading her to question actions and motivations as she endeavoured to reach a depth of understanding. She had a strong sense of constantly developing her own perspective, skills and abilities within each of the four school contexts she had worked.

The headteacher often illustrated her own understanding of distributed leadership through reflecting on the leadership styles of three previous heads she had worked with. Prior to her appointment to headship, she felt very fortunate to have worked with heads who had encouraged her and delegated tasks to her. However, unlike the other two case studies, she did not wax lyrical on their abilities to distribute leadership.

Reflecting back on her career, she explored first how as a primary teacher, she had had little cause to understand a leadership role (second interview vignette (xxix) - Appendix 4a). Then, she moved into an unpromoted nursery post with responsibility for a team of staff, stepping out from the ‘bubble’ of a class teacher role. She encountered her first real experience of leadership, representing a significant growth point (second interview vignette (xxx) - Appendix 4a). On appointment as acting depute, she learned how distributed leadership could be utilised to move staff forward and to ‘get them on side’. Perhaps this was where her understanding of a manipulative aspect to distributed leadership, sown in her nursery experience, became established in her practice (second interview vignette (xxxi) - Appendix 4a).
As acting depute, she found herself in ‘quite a difficult position’ since in her view, distributed leadership was not evident ‘before [she] went to the school’. She had learned hard lessons, some of them very public, such as the first time she had led a staff in-service session and staff disengaged because they had not been involved in identifying the improvement priority (second interview vignette (xxxii) - Appendix 4a).

As an acting depute, she observed the entrenched position of the head, finding alternative ways to work with challenging staff, providing an insight into the cultural changes she was trying to effect (second interview vignette (xxxiii) - Appendix 4a).

On appointment as permanent depute in a new school, she had had to draw from those understandings to challenge established practice and negotiate her role with the head (second interview vignette (xxxiv) - Appendix 4a), combining a teacher’s perspective and ‘management view’. She drew from her previous experience to guide her in the leadership and management of her SQH school improvement project, focusing on developing the leadership capabilities of support staff with restorative approaches to the point where they were tasked with developing the capabilities of teaching staff (second interview vignette (xxxv) - Appendix 4a). As a member of the SMT, she recognised her role in ‘giving [staff] confidence’. She also recognised the head she worked with could convey instant disapproval with ‘the face’, making staff ‘shrink’, negatively effecting their confidence to take forward leadership roles. All this had helped shape her understandings of distributed leadership:

\[ \text{it was really quite powerful and it was just about making people feel valued and making them feel they can make decisions.} \]

On appointment as headteacher, she had drawn from that understanding to change the established practices within her new school (second interview vignette (xxi) - Appendix 4a). Over almost a three-year period, she had purposely worked on and with staff to develop a distributed perspective.

\[ \text{Informed by an Understanding of School Improvement Practices} \]

The headteacher’s knowledge and understanding of distributed leadership was in part informed by an understanding of school improvement practices. Through engaging staff in school leadership, she understood the benefits:
I wanted things to change. I wanted it to look different, I wanted people to be more engaged and …feel good about themselves, I suppose. And feel that they could contribute.

Developing ‘shared values’, a ‘shared purpose’ and ‘cohesion’ united staff in school improvement efforts (second interview vignette (xxxvi) - Appendix 4a). Such agreement smoothed the path for change, as with the surprising ease with which the school’s monitoring policy was developed and implemented (second interview vignette (xxxvii) - Appendix 4a). The headteacher identified the general contribution distributed leadership had made to developing a sense of staff feeling ‘valued’ and seeing their ‘impact on the school’. In short, the headteacher felt ‘you just get more done’. However, there was also a degree of manipulation:

it’s really quite straightforward. You just get the staff to decide they want to do it [laughed], you know.

This seemed at odds with her intention to empower staff and to appreciate that they had a responsibility for the wider school beyond their classroom or direct remit:

So I think people want to do stuff, I think that’s the thing. They want to do it and they don’t have to come and ask me.

She perceived staff had benefitted from operating a distributed perspective in practice, developing confidence to make decisions. That by distributing leadership, staff engaged much more in school improvement processes, motivated by the leadership roles they played, leading to them ‘feell[ing] good about themselves’ and ‘feell[ing] that they could contribute’. However, this went further than staff personal benefit since the intention was to maximise the potential of staff. As a result of engaging staff, efforts ‘impact[ed] more quickly on school improvement’. In that way, there were reciprocal staff and school benefits (second interview vignette (xxxviii) - Appendix 4a).

For this headteacher, distributed leadership was focused on enhancing the quality of pupil experience through school improvement: ‘I suppose for me it’s all about capacity building of the school’; ‘capacity and staff to all work together’. She had learned that engaging staff through leadership roles brought faster and enhanced results. She believed such change was deep and sustainable. Of the three case study headteachers, the third was most explicit about what she had learned through various posts about the impact collaborative enquiry could have on pulling groups of
teaching and support staff together, to focus on an aspect of school improvement (second interview vignette (xxxix) - Appendix 4a). Within the 360° questionnaire responses, she agreed there were clear benefits from having more than one leader in the school. Staff in the main concurred (1l - Appendix 4d).

That approach was in turn felt to have improved the quality of educational provision for pupils (second interview vignette (xxxx) - Appendix 4a). Within the 360° questionnaire responses, a number of staff explicitly identified the impact their leadership role had on the school (1m - Appendix 4d). However, the headteacher was aware of the need to ensure expectations placed on staff were realistic and manageable:

it’s about knowing what you can ask them to do without giving them such a burden that they begin to get stressed ... you've got to have relationships with the people.

Informed by an Understanding of the Literature on School Improvement

The headteacher’s knowledge and understanding of distributed leadership was in part informed by understandings from the literature on school improvement. She frequently referred to the influence of postgraduate study, having undertaken a Masters before embarking on SQH. At various points of her career she had engaged with the leadership literature, seeking out richer understandings to develop her practice, beginning with her nursery leadership role (second interview vignette (xxxxi) - Appendix 4a), returning to postgraduate study as a newly appointed acting depute encountering staff resistance (second interview vignette (xxxxii) - Appendix 4a).

The headteacher was specific about the role postgraduate study had played in developing her understandings of distributed leadership, not having heard the term previous to embarking on SQH (second interview vignette (xxxxiii) - Appendix 4a). She was commitment to developing an understanding of a distributed perspective, an awareness of effective approaches for engaging staff in school improvement, and an appreciation of the inherent tensions. Her drive to seek professional development in that regard, related to a lack of modelling opportunities.

Beyond the literature, she gained much from taking forward a collaborative project in one school and a school improvement project in another. Through postgraduate
study, her actions and leadership role were legitimized in the eyes of colleagues. That said, she had a pragmatic understanding of a distributed perspective arising from both experience and reflection on theory (second interview vignette (xxxxiv) - Appendix 4a).

Leadership as Distinct from Management
The headteacher made little explicit but much implicit reference to the distinction between leadership and management. She referred to leadership as relating to ‘knowledge of the bigger picture’ and requiring ‘political know how’. She also referred to different leadership styles and to individuals having ‘a leadership quality’. She frequently referred to being ‘leaderly’, which included having ‘a clear vision’, and to ‘leaderly qualities’ (second interview vignette (xlv) - Appendix 4a).

Throughout the interviews, when referring to distributed leadership, the headteacher’s intentions were situated within what is largely regarded the leadership domain. As such, key aspects of leadership included vision-building (‘shared vision’, ‘shared value’, ‘shared understanding’, ‘shared view’, ‘bigger picture’), direction setting (‘moving in the same direction’, ‘the direction of the school’, ‘driving everything’), deeper level processes, strategic aspects (‘making decisions’, ‘political awareness’, ‘affecting change’), empowering staff (‘encourage others to lead’, ‘lead themselves’) and interpersonal relationships. Management was generally aligned to role or promoted position (‘management team’, ‘senior management level’), to the ‘management of people’, a functional ‘coordination’ role relating to resources, spaces and ‘stuff’ (‘roles and responsibilities’), and operational processes (‘design brief’, ‘remit’, ‘management view’). Aligning management with formal position was a double-edged sword, as explored below. In her 360° questionnaire responses, she exemplified leadership pertaining to, ‘strategy and collegiate/development’ and management pertaining to aspects such as, ‘Timetables. Cloakroom arrangements. Lunch arrangements’. In her 360° questionnaire response, the headteacher indicated that in her view, staff saw a clear distinction between leadership roles and management responsibilities. Seventeen of her twenty staff members agreed.

The headteacher also seemed to perceive leadership in a higher order relationship to management and management in a higher order relationship to administration.
However, this was implicit throughout the interviews rather than explicitly referred to. For example, management systems were perceived as necessary in order to enable leadership to flourish. She also made a clear distinction between operational leadership and strategic distributed leadership. For instance, the development of the operational resource policy was seen as relatively basic compared with the development of more strategic policies.

Distributed Leadership as Distinct from Delegation
The headteacher made a clear distinction between delegation and distributed leadership (second interview vignette (xlvi) - Appendix 4a). However, she suggested, ‘I think some people think it’s delegation’, ‘actually seeing [distribute leadership] in action is difficult to find’. She had experienced delegation first hand throughout her earlier career (second interview vignette (xlvii) - Appendix 4a) and had learned the distinction between delegation and distributed leadership from her nursery role:

   And then it’s not distributed leadership any more. It’s really delegation of duty and ‘I want you to do it that way’.

As a depute, the distinction became even clearer, ‘I was being delegated to’. She described a developing leadership style from a simplistic understanding of delegation to a much more sophisticated understanding of distributed leadership (second interview vignette (xlviii) - Appendix 4a; third interview vignette (x) - Appendix 4b). She expressed the view that distributed leadership was ‘collegiate’ and ‘collaborative’, staff were ‘all equals’. As a headteacher, she came to appreciate the notion of ‘upward delegation’ (third interview vignette (xi) - Appendix 4b).

Informed by an Understanding of the Policy Discourse
The headteacher’s knowledge and understanding of distributed leadership was in part informed by an understanding of the policy discourse. She was well aware of both the policy discourse around distributed leadership and related literature. Rather than feeling an external expectation placed upon her to distribute leadership, she felt a distributed perspective was an integral part of her leadership philosophy, shaped by previous experience and by engagement with postgraduate study. Whilst sympathetic to the challenges distributed leadership presented to other heads, she felt a top-down management style was short sighted (second interview vignette (xlxi) - Appendix 4a).
The influence of the policy discourse was very much apparent in the headteacher’s preoccupation with being ultimately accountable: ‘what I’ve learned as a headteacher is everything is your fault’ (second interview vignette (I) - Appendix 4a). In that regard, she walked a fine line between empowering staff and keeping their influence within defined and prescribed boundaries. In so doing, things never became ‘too risky’ as she was able to take ‘measured risks’. Indeed, she articulated:

*It’s almost like I’ve done my risk assessment on that member of staff and they’re okay, you know.*

10.3.2 The Professional Identity of Teachers

Teachers played an essential role within the headteacher’s distributed perspective. She had invested considerable effort in developing in them a new sense of professional identity. In her view, they had become more confident in school leadership roles. She perceived her role as encouraging, enabling and supporting such engagement. She had emphasized the need for staff to take responsibility for the pupils in their care and for everyday decision-making.

As staff became more confident, the headteacher encouraged them to make more far-reaching decisions. She had a determination not to cave in when staff wanted her to make decisions for them, insisting instead that they reach consensus. She had little regard for staff who kept quite during the discussion phase only to approach her individually to try to influence the outcome of a decision (third interview vignette (xii) - Appendix 4b). She was engaged in developing with staff a sense of collective responsibility and sense of shared purpose.

The headteacher did not take the degree to which distributed leadership was embedded for granted and had developed a keen appreciation for the need to differentiate her expectations and approaches in response to what she perceived as the stage of readiness of each member of her staff. In that regard, there were members of support staff she entrusted to a greater extent than some teaching staff. For example, when taking a class out of school, she was careful to place a trusted member of support staff with a teacher who did not inspire her confidence. There was also an indication within the 360° questionnaire responses that for some staff, taking on a leadership role was still considered an add on to their teaching remit, suggesting distributed leadership was not fully embedded in their professional...
identity.

As with the first two case studies, ‘time to lead’ seemed an important consideration, in terms of, ‘making sure… that everybody’s got time’. The collegiate time agreement provided formally negotiated time for collaborative activity. Teachers were class committed and where thought necessary, the headteacher provided time for individuals to take forward school leadership.

As with the first two case studies, the headteacher appeared to make considerable effort to get to know her staff and where each teacher was on the leadership spectrum. In so doing, she was able to target encouragement and support, in an effort to engage them. What emerged from the data was:

• Not all teachers seek a leadership role or perceive leadership to be an integral part of their teacher role
• Not all teacher leaders perceive themselves to be leaders
• The leadership exercised by teachers was focused on the curriculum, on teaching, learning and assessment, and progressing specific school improvement priorities related to those aspects.
• The leadership exercised by teachers was not focused on their professional relationship with support staff

Perceptions of Leadership in Relation to the Role of the Teacher

The headteacher articulated an expectation that all staff participate in school leadership (third interview vignette (xiii) - Appendix 4b). However, she recognised there was wide variation in the type and extent of engagement (third interview vignette (xiv) - Appendix 4b). For some staff, participation was relatively surface level. For others, participation involved a whole school leadership role. As with the first two case studies, the headteacher seemed very much engaged in purposefully developing teachers’ identity to include leadership as an integral part of their professional role. For some, that was still very much classroom based. When asked within the 360° questionnaire if all staff are willing to take on a leadership role, there was more variety in responses than to any other item (1n - Appendix 4d).

The headteacher seemed undecided regarding how embedded a distributed perspective was in the professional identities of staff. On the one hand, she felt if a
headteacher with a different leadership style was appointed to the school, staff might ‘shrink back’. On the other, she felt ‘they’re not going to give that up’.

Harnessing Teachers with an Understanding of a Distributed Perspective
As with the second case study, on appointment, the headteacher had recognised none of the staff were confident leaders. She attributed this to the previous head’s leadership style and lack of opportunity for staff to make decisions, feel empowered and take ownership. She had set about building up their confidence to take the lead, albeit within carefully crafted boundaries such as agreed policies and design briefs. From there, she built on each teacher’s developing understanding of a distributed perspective, reaching a point where she felt ‘four members of staff … do way more than they’ve been asked or are expected to do’.

Harnessing Enthusiastic Staff
The headteacher placed considerable emphasis on knowing what made each staff member tick, enabling her to approach them individually to ignite their enthusiasm for an aspect of school improvement she hoped they would take forward. However, she recognised this approach was potentially problematic, worrying that it might be unethical or manipulative (second interview vignette (li) - Appendix 4a). Regardless, she had found a way to negotiate with staff their engagement in leadership roles (second interview vignette (lii) - Appendix 4a). On other occasions, she would be quick to recognise and harness the potential and enthusiasm of specific staff members to progress distributed leadership at whole school level (second interview vignette (liii) - Appendix 4a).

Engaging Less Confident/Enthusiastic Members of Staff
Almost three years on, the headteacher intimated that developing staff remained a challenge (second interview vignette (liv) - Appendix 4a). Indeed, she recognised ‘there are people who don’t want a leadership role’. In such instances, the headteacher seemed clear on her role, adjusting the level of support accordingly (second interview vignette (lv) - Appendix 4a). The design briefs were seen to provide a measure of comfort to less confident staff, safe in the knowledge of a clearly defined structure for leading aspects of school improvement.
Recognising and Overcoming Potential Barriers

The headteacher recognised soon after taking up headship, that perhaps the greatest barrier to her leadership style was the almost complete lack of staff understanding of a distributed perspective. For her, distributed leadership depended upon,

*having a shared culture, a shared set of values and then trying to get everybody to work towards it*

Having inherited an established staff wary of making any decisions for themselves in case they were given ‘a row’, the headteacher first set about building a shared understanding with the depute. From there, both placed an expectation on all staff to engage in decision-making processes although this was not necessarily easy. Such encouragement could lead to problematic situations:

*I find the whole distributed leadership sticky because it’s all about letting others lead knowing they’ll make their own mistakes.*

On occasion, ‘one or two things happen that sometimes you don’t know anything about’. She had experienced instances when, ‘things happen that … you don’t want to happen’ and when ‘things had gone a bit off’, describing how she had to mop up issues encountered as a result of decisions staff had made (second interview vignette (lvi) - Appendix 4a). In that regard, the headteacher articulated maintaining a careful balance between resolving issues and trying to ensure similar issues did not occur again, and avoiding staff withdrawing from leadership roles and decision-making when times got tough (second interview vignette (lvii) - Appendix 4a). Within many of the headteacher’s reflections, there were contradictions particularly in relation to autonomy and control, perhaps exemplifying that for the third case study, distributed leadership was a contentious area: ‘you only give people enough rope to hang themselves, and not the school’.

After almost three years of determined effort, there was still ‘resistance’ on the part of a few staff to either ‘go the extra mile’ or engage directly in leadership roles (second interview vignette (lviii) - Appendix 4a). There was an indication within the 360° questionnaire responses that some staff resented that. The headteacher was concerned that over time, such resentment might lead to some of the more active staff disengaging (third interview vignette (xv) - Appendix 4b). Another problem related to that stance was that across the sociograms, ‘some people looked quite isolated’.
Perceptions of Self as a Teacher Leader

As with the first two case studies, developing perceptions of self as a teacher leader appeared linked to developing perceptions of leadership in relation to the role of the teacher. In addition to getting to know each staff member’s stage of readiness for leadership and how to ‘push their buttons’ to take on a leadership role, the headteacher also appeared engaged in efforts to develop the individual and collective identity of teachers to view themselves as teacher leaders. For some staff, this appeared early days (third interview vignette (xvi) - Appendix 4b).

The 360° questionnaire responses highlighted although only one teacher felt they did not play a leadership role within the school, others perceived a narrow scope to their role. Asked how they became involved in a leadership role, for some teachers involvement had arisen from the specific class based role they had (‘leading the class’; ‘the nature of the job means you have to lead the team in your classroom’; ‘as part of my job’; ‘specific part of this particular job’; ‘specific job’; ‘job description’). Others had volunteered for a wider leadership role (‘volunteered’; ‘I volunteered to join Literacy WP’; ‘I am interested in these areas and volunteered’; ‘through own interest then going to management with ideas then given responsibility to take forward’) while others had been asked to take on a wider leadership role (‘was asked if I was interested’; ‘asked to join one working party’). Only two teachers identified they themselves had initiated their leadership role arising out of areas of personal interest. That being the case, it would suggest leadership was not fully integrated into the professional identity of teachers. Furthermore, a formal remit or legitimised role seemed significant, with the headteacher the gatekeeper to opportunities. That being the case, it again raises questions as to the degree to which distributed leadership was embedded within the school, and the degree of ownership and empowerment of staff engaged in leadership roles.

Perceptions of the Parameters for Teacher Leadership

Although the headteacher ‘agreed’ staff were empowered when they took on a leadership role, that view was not consistently reflected in the staff responses (1o - Appendix 4d). The sociometric patterns of influence and variation in staff leadership hubs depended on what aspect of ‘school work’ was the focus. The patterns for ‘curricular matters’, ‘teaching, learning and/or assessment matters’ were broadly
similar for teacher roles. The pattern for personal concerns identified some of those leaders plus alternative leaders. Thereafter, far fewer teaching staff beyond the headteacher and depute head appeared to play a leadership role. Teacher leadership roles seemed mainly aligned to either curriculum development or to specific priorities from the school’s improvement plan as explicitly mentioned by a number of teachers. Teachers did not appear to perceive other aspects of school life as part of their locus, unless it was part of their remit. Two teachers explicitly referred to the mentoring of newly qualified teachers (NQTs). Teachers within the nursery and the specialist provision class articulated a leadership role with the team of staff they worked with.

The headteacher commented staff could sometimes only see things from within their ‘own wee bubble’ and lacked a wider political awareness. Indeed, staff appeared to perceive their leadership role as residing within the school whereas hers was perceived to be more strategic and located within and beyond the school. In the main, teachers perceived their leadership role as being classroom based, which the headteacher attributed at least in part to herself (third interview vignette (xvii) - Appendix 4b). The headteacher felt there was an added complication in that regard. In her view, since significant changes to teachers’ conditions of service came into effect in 2001, teachers no longer took ‘any responsibility for what happens beyond the classroom’ (third interview vignette (xviii) - Appendix 4b). She felt less experienced teachers did not have the same sense of collective responsibility as experienced teachers for either their own or for other classes within the school. She attributed this to changes in the support NQTs received by way of non-contact time, and to the amount of non-contact time class teachers in general were now entitled (second interview vignette (lix) - Appendix 4a).

The extent of teacher influence appeared contained, operational in relation to their engagement in the school’s decision-making processes (1p - Appendix 4d), ability to question established rules, procedures and practices (1q - Appendix 4d), involvement in critically evaluating school policy (1r - Appendix 4d) (which the headteacher did not perceive as an issue: ‘I think as headteachers we’ve got more control over the policy stuff and the vision’), and feeling a shared sense of accountability (1s - Appendix 4d). Overall, a shared understanding did not appear to be firmly established.
In contrast, staff generally felt able to suggest ideas for improving what happened within the school (1t - Appendix 4d), and to a degree, propose and implement new ways of doing things across the school (1u - Appendix 4d), but appeared less confident that when they did proposed new ways of doing things, those ideas were then implemented (1v - Appendix 4d), which surprised the headteacher (third interview vignette (xix) - Appendix 4b). Staff appeared less secure with using their initiative to intervene when they felt this was necessary (1w - Appendix 4d).

The parameters of teacher leadership appeared linked to developing perceptions of self as a teacher leader, in turn linked to developing perceptions of leadership in relation to the role of the teacher. Such parameters appeared both set by the headteacher in legitimising the nature of leadership roles for teachers, and set by the teachers themselves. The headteacher remained in control: ‘So there is that element of, there is control and there is management of people’. Her priority for teachers was focused on classroom practice, rather than on whole school or strategic aspects of leadership. That may explain the tensions surfacing at various points relating to teachers’ positioning of leadership and management.

Teachers repeatedly referred to ‘management’ as a person or persons. That alignment of management with formal position was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it provided authority for the headteacher which she fully utilized (third interview vignette (xx) - Appendix 4b). On the other hand, it provided an opt-out for staff engagement when times were challenging: ‘I think that’s when I’m ‘the management’. Do you know, when there’s issues’. It meant that the parameters for teacher accountability were defined: ‘Responsibility lies with the management [laughed]. … It’s a kind of cop out’. The headteacher regarded such a position with no sense of accountability as, ‘a nice place to lead’. She explored teachers’ positioning of leadership and management at length (third interview vignette (xxi) - Appendix 4b; third interview vignette (xxii) - Appendix 4b; third interview vignette (xxiii) - Appendix 4b; third interview vignette (xxiv) - Appendix 4b; third interview vignette (xxv) - Appendix 4b). The teachers appeared to be waiting for the headteacher to either act or to sanction their actions. As ‘the management’, that was her role (third interview vignette (xxvi) - Appendix 4b) and although she claimed to want to change staff’s perception in that regard, she recognized an equal but
different convenience for her, leading to her perpetuating the parameters for teacher leadership (third interview vignette (xxvii) - Appendix 4b), even when she recognised such parameters did not sit well with the collective responsibility behind distributed leadership (third interview vignette (xxviii) - Appendix 4b).

**Teachers’ Perceptions of Support Staff in Relation to Teacher Leadership**

Teachers’ perceptions of support staff in relation to teacher leadership appeared linked to the parameters of teacher leadership, which in turn appeared linked to developing perceptions of self as a teacher leader and to developing perceptions of leadership in relation to the role of the teacher. In brief, as with the other two case studies, the leadership exercised by teachers was not focused on their professional relationship with support staff. That is to say, teachers did not perceive it as part of their role to develop the leadership capacity of support staff. What differed, however, was the lack of engagement between teachers and support staff which the headteacher thought might be linked to her consideration of teachers’ changing perceptions of their role outwith the classroom since a change in their working conditions in 2001. That stance provided support staff with the opportunity to take the lead in the public areas of the school: ‘That just frees the support staff up so they can … be the leader and do their thing without that, bossy one coming down on them’.

The headteacher became increasingly concerned about the lack of recognition afforded to the leadership role of support staff (third interview vignette (xxix) - Appendix 4b). Also, whether and why class teachers might have a different perception to the role of support staff, depending on the physical location of their interactions.

**10.3.3 The Professional Identity of Support Staff**

Support staff also played an essential role within the headteacher’s distributed perspective. She had purposefully developed their confidence with decision-making (third interview vignette (xxx) - Appendix 4b). She held them in high regard and indeed trusted some support staff to make better decisions and take better actions than some class teachers. Perhaps in part due to her previous experience of building up the leadership capacity of support staff through her SQH school improvement project, she recognized the significant contribution they could make to
school leadership, believing all staff had a leadership role to play ‘in some way’ within the school. However, half of the support staff reported they did not play a leadership role within the school and a number of support staff appeared relatively isolated across the sociograms.

The 360° questionnaire responses along with the headteacher’s reflection on the significance of that data, identified a distinction between the active engagement of teaching and non-teaching staff within her distributed perspective. Support staff roles seemed aligned to the care, welfare and educational provision of pupils either within or out with the classroom context, as explicitly mentioned by three of the support staff. What emerged from the data was:

- lack of a recognised leadership role within the school’s public spaces
- lack of a recognised leadership role within semi-private classroom spaces
- frustration expressed by support staff and their untapped potential

There did not appear to be a fully established or consistent culture of distributed leadership. Indeed, the headteacher commented, ‘it’s almost like two cultures running alongside each other’ (third interview vignette (xxxi) - Appendix 4b). Throughout the staff responses, teachers appeared to feel much more secure in their leadership roles than support staff. Indeed, the headteacher identified support staff were having, ‘a completely different experience at work than the teachers’. Moreover, there appeared tensions between teaching and support staff. Support staff signalled they felt underutilised particularly in classrooms. In developing the culture of the school further, the headteacher felt the leadership potential of support staff could be addressed.

**Lack of a Recognised Leadership Role within the School’s Public Spaces**

Overall support staff did not appear to be perceived by colleagues other than the headteacher, as playing a key leadership role. This became apparent both through the 360° staff responses and through the sociograms. Support staff were less positive in their responses than teachers. With few exceptions, they appeared to lack a recognised leadership role within the public spaces of the school. Indeed, only half of support staff felt they played a leadership role, identifying the impact of that role as:

- ‘Helps in classrooms, assists children with extra help when needed.’
‘Allows smooth running of areas in school without the need for teachers to be present in those areas.’
‘Help to keep a calm and safe environment.’

Although the headteacher felt support staff were empowered to lead, only half agreed. Out with the specialist provision class (and possibly the nursery class), the connections between support staff and class teachers appeared based around specific pupils. The headteacher acknowledged this and wondered if support staff did not seek a wider leadership role (fourth interview vignette (ix) - Appendix 4c). However, that did not sit comfortably with her view that support staff were ‘really quite leaderly’ in her dealings with them (third interview vignette (xxxii) - Appendix 4b).

The headteacher was troubled by the distinct difference between the perceptions of support and teaching staff, and a discernable difference within the support staff (third interview vignette (xxxiii) - Appendix 4b). Within ‘their little remit’ and when focused on ‘their activities with the children’, support staff seemed secure in their leadership role. They seemed secure in their ‘whole school’ role with the headteacher and she was confident in their abilities (third interview vignette (xxxiv) - Appendix 4b). However, they themselves did not appear to recognise their own leadership within the school’s public spaces, nor did that role appear to be recognised by teachers. Even in their role with the headteacher, there appeared little scope for support staff to identify their leadership. Instead, it appeared their involvement had arisen from the specific in-class or out-of-class role they had been assigned (‘it is part of my role as classroom assistant’; ‘job, placed in certain areas’) or from having been asked to take on a wider leadership role (‘asked to by management’).

[A1] appeared to form a hub for ‘personal concerns’, with five members of the support staff regularly approaching her for advice and support. The headteacher was able to provide a possible explanation for that trend:

I was expecting that. …So [A1]’s the one that does the mail drop and that kind of stuff. …and she’s been here a long time as well.

Lack of a Recognised Leadership Role within Semi-Private Classroom Spaces

A particular network was identified in relation to staff working within the specialist provision class within which, influential relationships were most often reciprocated.
Outwith the specialist provision class (and possibly the nursery class), notable through the data gathered, was the lack of leadership perceived to be exercised by support staff within the semi-private spaces of the classroom. There was one partial exception, regarding ‘pupil care, welfare and/or personal concerns’. In that regard, support staff appeared to have a legitimised leadership role, where they had a long-standing relationship with a child who required a high degree of additional support. In that way, support staff might be perceived by the child’s new class teacher as the expert in supporting that child. Individual support staff might therefore be perceived as having a leadership role, albeit a very defined, contained, specific role.

Although there was a sense the headteacher had purposefully encouraged support staff to incorporate leadership into their professional identity in aspects of their remit pertaining to whole school matters, she recognized there was ‘still this reluctance to take on a real sort of leadership role’. Furthermore, where aspects of their remit pertained to the classroom level, they appeared to relinquish the leadership role to the class teacher (third interview vignette (xxxv) - Appendix 4b). The headteacher became increasingly concerned about the dichotomy within support staff’s view of their role (third interview vignette (xxxvi) - Appendix 4b).

**Frustration Expressed by a Number of Support Staff and their Untapped Potential**

A contradiction arose between the headteacher’s initial perception of the leadership role played by support staff, and the perception held by teachers and support staff themselves. What emerged from the 360° feedback from staff and the sociometric analysis, was a clear distinction between teaching and non-teaching staff in their active engagement in school leadership.

On the whole, support staff did not appear to have the same access to or ability to create networks and hubs as did the majority of teachers, appearing relatively isolated. Moreover, only half perceived of themselves as leaders and appeared more dissatisfied with the status quo than did the teachers. Two members of support staff directly involved in supporting pupil learning ‘disagreed’ that staff felt actively engaged in the school’s decision-making processes, three members of support staff directly involved in supporting pupil learning ‘disagreed’ that staff felt able to question established rules, and three members of support staff directly involved in supporting pupil learning ‘disagreed’ that there was a shared sense of
accountability for what goes well and for what goes wrong. One might surmise all four aspects form contributing factors in staff’s sense of security within a leadership role. One might also surmise that support staff felt less secure than teaching staff in their leadership roles.

10.4 Emic Issue 4: Developing the School as a Learning Community
As with the first two case studies, the headteacher’s purpose in taking forward a distributed perspective was essentially to enhance the educational provision of pupils. Her efforts surfaced repeatedly in the form of developing a sense of staff engagement with school improvement. In order to achieve that, she was focused on developing the school as a learning community. Developing a cohesive approach within which staff could take forward leadership roles, lay at the heart of those efforts:

*it really is about building community and about building activities that people feel they can lead within.*

She had developed a range of strategies for engaging staff in school improvement processes. She held the overview and demarcated the parameters. She endeavoured to reach a depth of understanding of a distributed perspective, differentiating her approach for each staff member. The progress made in that regard was confirmed by staff who in the main felt involved in school leadership (1x - Appendix 4d).

There did appear to be a culture developing conducive to distributed leadership within which staff ‘support[ed] each other’. However, that culture appeared fragile and dependent on the headteacher’s expectations and parameters. It was also inconsistent and at times contradictory, particularly in relation to the contrast between the experience of teaching and support staff: a ‘double culture’.

Three key aspects emerged from the findings in relation to developing the school as a learning community:

- Developing shared understandings
- Sharing knowledge and expertise
- Learning together for school improvement
10.4.1 Developing Shared Understandings

As discussed, the headteacher’s knowledge, understanding and practice of a distributed perspective had been informed over many years by a number of influences. She was still developing her own understandings of a distributed perspective within her current school context. Her efforts were focused on developing shared understandings with staff (second interview vignette (Ix) - Appendix 4a). She emphasised the importance of ‘knowing your staff’ and ‘where they are in their career development’. Through doing so, she encouraged them to take on roles, progressing their professional development. As with the first two case studies, her distributed perspective encompassed an evolving socially constructed reality.

In the absence of staff understandings of distributed leadership from postgraduate study, or from having worked with a headteacher with a distributed perspective, it seemed even more important for this headteacher that she found ways to develop their understandings. A number of areas seemed to be in progress. At a fundamental level, an understanding of the distinction between leadership and management still appeared to be developing (1y - Appendix 4d). So too did a distinction between leadership roles and management responsibilities (1z - Appendix 4d).

At a more complex level, despite significant progress with developing shared understandings with staff, there was still much more to work on. Management was located within a person or remit, rather than aligned with processes and actions: ‘the management’. This provided the headteacher with the means to manipulate situations, using her position to effect certain outcomes. It also provided staff with the means to opt in and out of leadership, or delegate decisions to management: ‘management make the final decisions’, particularly ‘when there’s issues’. There was a sense of convenience in relation to staff making first a distinction between leadership and management and second a distinction between their areas and SMT areas of leadership. There was a distinction in the tone used by staff in relation to whether they were reflecting on their own leadership role which tended to be inclusive and indicated a sense of ownership (‘our’) in contrast to the SMT role (third interview vignette (xxxvii) - Appendix 4b).
Cutting across the interviews was the sense that the headteacher was skilled at finding ways to engage and persuade staff. She raised a longstanding concern that that ability could be described as ‘manipulation’. Certainly, she used to her advantage the previously discussed distinction apparently in operation between the staff’s leadership locus (internal, and in the main limited to a focus on curriculum matters, learning and teaching, and progressing specific school improvement priorities related to those aspects) and the SMT leadership locus (internal and external, and focused on all aspects): ‘It keeps it clear, it’s not confusing, it’s easy to deal with’. However, that led to a tension or undercurrent within which the headteacher was constantly renegotiating undefined territory.

In her 360° questionnaire responses, the headteacher ‘strongly agreed’ staff played an active role in committees and groups charged with making important decisions, were actively engaged in decision-making processes, critically evaluated school policy, questioned established rules, procedures and practices, regularly suggested ideas for improving what happens in the school, and regularly proposed and implemented new ways of doing things across the school. She also ‘agreed’ there was a sense of shared leadership amongst staff, and that staff consulted effectively with each other on new initiatives. However, as has been discussed, there was variation between the headteacher’s view and that of her staff, particularly the support staff.

10.4.2 Sharing Knowledge and Expertise
The headteacher identified how she had personally benefitted from operating a distributed perspective in practice. She identified the impact on her own developing confidence as she grew into leadership roles and better understood the potential of her earlier roles. As a headteacher, the relationship she had established with the depute provided considerable support, as well as making work an enjoyable place to be: ‘we have a great laugh. We just have a ball at work. It’s really good fun’. She also derived benefit from trusting administrative staff with leadership roles (second interview vignette (lxi) - Appendix 4a).

Staff also appeared to benefit from operating a distributed perspective in practice, mainly in relation to growing in confidence and inclusion in decision-making. As with
the first two case studies, there were examples, albeit within specific boundaries, of teachers and support staff, playing leadership roles and exerting influence on colleagues, through perceived knowledge and expertise. Staff were encouraged to build up and then share knowledge and expertise to develop the school as a learning community. Collegiate time was focussed on that endeavour, with processes and structures established to enable that to happen.

Two main strategies were employed. The first, involved a focus on individual staff effort through encouraging staff to take on roles linked to areas of personal interest either through ‘pushing their buttons’ or through the formal CPD review process. The second, involved a focus on the collective staff effort through providing protected time through the collegiate time agreement, endorsing the ‘staff huddle’, developing school policies as a basis for agreed expectations and design briefs to set in place agreed boundaries for progressing school improvement priorities.

In order for a distributed perspective on leadership to become established in the practice of staff, one might argue a shared sense of accountability is a prerequisite. However, this did not appear to be firmly established (1zz - Appendix 4d). The headteacher felt, ‘If it is a big issue – usually I take responsibility – not too much blame’. Furthermore, staff perceived responsibility and accountability resided with SMT (third interview vignette (xxxviii) - Appendix 4b).

10.4.3 Learning Together For School Improvement
As discussed at length under the third emic issue, the headteacher had come to appreciate the contribution distributed leadership could make to developing a sense of staff feeling ‘valued’ and seeing their ‘impact on the school’. She felt, ‘you just get more done’, by engaging staff in school leadership. Whilst acknowledging the challenges distributed leadership presented, she felt other heads compromised their health by trying to lead everything through a top-down management style. As with the first two case studies, the headteacher seemed clear in her own mind she was endeavouring to reach a depth of shared ownership over school improvement, that the strategies she adopted were intentional, to empower staff and to engage them in collective decision-making and concerted action.
Staff were still learning how to take forward shared leadership both individually and collectively. The headteacher was lead learner in that regard and had been throughout her career, reflecting on practice and returning to postgraduate study each time she was unsure of how best to proceed. She critically reflected in and on her own practice, candidly exploring the many aspects of a distributed perspective she found challenging. In each of the three schools she had played a leadership role, she had pushed the boundaries of established practice. On taking up her headship, she had invested considerable effort in coming to an understanding of the school context enabling her to again push those boundaries. Perhaps more so than the other two headteachers, she identified a number of problems and tensions inherent within a distributed perspective. There was a ‘convenience’ in aligning management to formal position. Moreover, contradictions were evident in entrusting staff in leadership roles whilst maintaining order and control. In that regard, the headteacher frequently referred to taking ‘risks’. For her, power and authority underpinned much of the language she used. This, despite being critical of a top-down management style and to the previous ‘locked down’ potential of staff she had inherited.

The headteacher expressed, ‘I can live with ambiguity’ as if doing so was a prerequisite to a distributed perspective. She was solution focused to challenges encountered, learning much from such experiences and encouraging staff to learn from them also. Such commitment to learning together for school improvement underpinned the headteacher’s engagement with the study. She perceived participation as offering ideal timing in relation to supporting her own continuing professional development, as she approached the end of her third year in headship. She also articulated the perceived benefits as supporting the school’s self-evaluation in its efforts to continuously improve. She acknowledged there might be uncomfortable findings and, when those were uncovered, actively explored their implications for her own practice and for the school as an organisation. The headteacher demonstrated considerable self-awareness, perhaps most evident in the revisiting of her concerns about potential ‘manipulation’ of staff.

The headteacher reflected that participation in the study had been ‘really positive’, ‘fascinating’ and ‘thought provoking’. The depute observed of the headteacher’s participation: ‘You’re a very reflective practitioner … so you’ve reflected on it’. It had
‘added’ to her understandings of the school and provided ‘good information to have at a school improvement level’. The headteacher identified the need to make explicit with staff the leadership role support staff played within whole school areas and their potential leadership role within classroom contexts (third interview vignette (xxxix) - Appendix 4b; fourth interview vignette (x) - Appendix 4c). Addressing the different expectations the headteacher placed on experienced and ‘younger teachers’ was identified as a second area for development (third interview vignette (xli) - Appendix 4b). A third example of a finding the headteacher sought to harness was in relation to recognising the need to be ‘a bit braver’ instead of relying on the convenience inherent in the positioning of ‘the management’, leading her to perpetuate the parameters for teacher leadership (third interview vignette (xlii) - Appendix 4b). The headteacher saw potential in developing school culture further through a deeper understanding of the implications of those three aspects and that it was her role to take that forward, particularly in relation to changing her own behaviours.
10.5 Conclusion to the Three Case Studies

Each of the three previous chapters presented the main findings from the case studies. What emerged across the case studies was headteachers committed to taking forward a distributed perspective on leadership and management. In doing so, they remained central to how distributed leadership operated in terms of: retaining overall power and influence; retaining strategic control over the direction of school improvement; and providing legitimisation to staff leadership.

Distributed leadership appeared to be ‘in the gift of the headteacher’, the result of purposeful planning requiring time and commitment. She was instrumental, whether through direct action or an indirect facilitative role. She set an expectation for how leadership operated and played a key role in modelling, enabling and encouraging a distributed perspective. In that regard, the headteacher required to have knowledge and understanding of both a distributed perspective and of the school’s staff.

A distributed perspective in practice was complex and multi-faceted in nature. School context played a critical role in terms of school size and structure, norms of interaction, collaborative engagement and trust. Leadership hubs and networks of influence emerged when individuals were held in high regard by colleagues for a specific reason, regardless of formal position or years of experience. That said, the headteacher and where present and to a lesser extent the depute, formed the most notable and consistent leadership hubs across the sociograms.

The headteacher’s professional identity had been shaped by her leadership and management experience to date, as well as by an understanding of school improvement practices, the literature on school improvement, and the policy discourse. The development of staff professional identity to encompass a leadership role was perceived by the headteacher to be an ongoing work in progress. Staff were on a journey, learning together. Parameters appeared to be both set by the headteacher in legitimising the nature of teachers’ leadership roles, and set by the teachers themselves.

In the first school, for some teachers, and for most support staff, the process was embryonic. For others, although a leadership role was clear, it was contained within defined boundaries and operational in its influence. Within those boundaries, the
headteacher sought to capitalise on staff readiness to engage in leadership roles. Her efforts also helped to shape the developing professional identity of teachers, which had not yet extended to ‘teacher leadership’. Support staff lacked a recognised leadership role both within the public and semi-private spaces of the school. Support staff expressed frustration in relation to their untapped potential. That frustration was shared by the headteacher.

In the second school, all but one teacher and all support staff perceived themselves to have leadership roles, albeit contained within defined boundaries. Within those boundaries, the headteacher sought to capitalise on staff readiness to engage, shaping professional identities to encompass leadership. Although staff had moved to a point where they could expect the full support of colleagues on assuming leadership roles, that position was still vulnerable in its development. A tension arose when the leadership role of support staff overlapped with that of the teachers’ public domain. Support staff lacked a recognised leadership role both within the public and semi-private spaces of the school.

In the third school, for some teachers and for half of the support staff, the process was embryonic. For others, although a leadership role was clear, it was contained within defined boundaries and operational in its influence. Within those boundaries, the headteacher sought to capitalise on staff readiness to engage in leadership roles. Her efforts also helped to shape the developing professional identity of teachers, which had not yet extended to ‘teacher leadership’. Support staff lacked a recognised leadership role both within the public and semi-private spaces of the school. Support staff expressed frustration in relation to their untapped potential. That frustration was shared by the headteacher.

The headteachers’ purpose in taking forward a distributed perspective was essentially, to develop the school as a learning community. Although much had been achieved in that regard, it was still work in progress and had not developed into a ‘bottom-up’ approach to school improvement. As discussed through the following analysis of the findings, distributed leadership was still, very much, ‘in the gift of the headteacher’.
Chapter Eleven: Analysis of the Findings

11.1 Introduction
The three preceding chapters took as their focus the three case studies comprising this thesis. The findings and their discussion were presented within each case study’s chapter, exploring in depth key themes and issues emerging from the data. This chapter pulls together the analysis of findings across the case studies, drawing from the literature review chapters to inform that analysis. The implications and limited generality of the findings are discussed, with cognisance paid to the limits of the claims to knowledge that it is possible to make.

This study is situated at a particular point in time and place. The three case study headteachers were all female heads of primary schools within the same central Scotland local authority. The headteachers were selected since they were held in high regard within their local authority and recognised as progressing a distributed perspective on leadership and management within their schools. The headteachers considered themselves to be committed to a distributed perspective. Each was a graduate of the SQH programme and had been a field assessor for two years prior to engaging with the study. Each was well placed to reflect on the theoretical frame and policy discourse. Each was in her early years of headship, still thinking through and learning about a distributed perspective in practice similar to Kinder’s (2010: 17) perspective of learning ‘as sense-making occurring] in a specific sociocultural context’. My professional dealings with the headteachers suggested they would engage well with discussion around a distributed perspective, exploring their experiences and perceptions, articulating key themes emerging from the data.

All three headteachers did appear to have a good understanding of what they meant by distributed leadership although there were different meanings attached to the term (Duignan, 2008). Their understandings were underpinned by research, literature and policy discourse, explored through previous postgraduate study, and by developing their practice in different roles across a number of primary schools. There was some conceptual confusion evident in terms of the distinctive (Davies, 2005; Gronn, 2003b; Spillane and Diamond, 2007; West-Burnham, 1997a), complementary (Durrant, 2004) and overlapping (Bush, 2008a; Fidler, 1997) nature of leadership and management. That said, leadership was privileged as distinct from
management (Gronn, 2003b; Gunter, 2004 and 2005). There was also a positioning of leadership as a higher order set of processes to management (Gunter, 2012; MacBeath, 2004; Spillane and Coldren, 2011). Each headteacher was able to articulate the rationale for and strategic intentions behind a distributed perspective, as well as the range of processes intentionally engaged with to purposefully take forward that perspective.

The interview style adopted supported each headteacher in recalling processes and approaches taken, as well as any role played either directly or indirectly in taking forward a distributed perspective. The 360° questionnaire and inbuilt sociometric analysis gathered the views and experiences of staff, informing the third and fourth interviews. The research methods encouraged the headteachers to reflect on the ‘lived’ as well as the ‘designed’ experience of leadership situated within their schools (Spillane and Coldren, 2011).

In this chapter, an overview of the significance of the study’s findings is presented in relation to its aim and research questions. The original aim of this study was:

To explore the experiences and perceptions of primary headteacher SQH graduates in their early years of headship situating a distributed perspective on leadership in their schools, as promoted by school leadership literature, national policy and the SQH programme.

The five research questions which guided the process of discovery were:

• What do primary headteachers understand as distributed leadership?
• What do primary headteachers identify as the key characteristics of distributed leadership if they believe it to be embedded in the practice of their particular schools?
• To what extent in the opinion of staff do those characteristics currently operate in their particular schools?
• How do those primary headteachers think those characteristics have come about? (e.g. naturally and/or purposely planned for)
• What do primary headteachers (and their staff) perceive as the benefits and/or problems arising from operating a distributed perspective in practice?

Five key themes emerged from the findings across the case studies, explored below within the analysis under the research questions:

1. The context specific nature of distributed leadership
2. The socially constructed nature of distributed leadership
3. The negotiated nature of distributed leadership
4. The hierarchical nature of distributed leadership
5. The taken for granted assumptions within a distributed perspective

A sixth, dominant theme emerged across the analysis of the findings that distributed leadership was to a large extent 'in the gift of the headteacher'. Those themes recurred in different forms and contexts, captured in three illustrative vignettes (first case study third interview vignette (xxviii) - Appendix 2b; second case study third interview vignette (xviii) - Appendix 3b; third case study second interview vignette (lxii) - Appendix 4b) and discussed in detail within this chapter. The sixth theme is returned to within the final conclusions chapter. It will be argued that if distributed leadership is still ‘in the gift of the headteacher’, the findings convey an important message for policy makers and for headteachers and staff in schools charged with taking forward such policy, in that primary headteachers play a pivotal role in a distributed perspective on leadership and management. This could be described as a fuzzy generalization (Hammersley et al., 2000). The findings are bounded by specific space and time, within a distinct policy period for Scottish schools.

11.2 What do primary headteachers understand as distributed leadership?
The headteachers in this study did not talk about their ‘distributed perspective’, nor did they refer to a ‘distributed perspective on leadership’ (Harris and Spillane, 2008; Spillane, 2006), nor did they refer to a ‘distributed perspective on leadership and management’ (Spillane and Diamond, 2007; Spillane and Coldren, 2011), they talked about distributed leadership. They were familiar with that term and felt they had a good understanding of what lay behind it. One headteacher preferred the term ‘shared leadership’ (Hallinger and Heck, 2009). Another more often used the term ‘distributive leadership’ (MacBeath, 2004), as adopted by HMIE in their contemporary policy documents. Regardless, they were referring to processes and activities within the leadership domain.

Both leadership and management were viewed as essential by the headteachers (Burton and Brundrett, 2005; Bush, 2008a and 2008b) and mutually reinforcing (Day et al., 2000). Although able to distinguish between leadership and management in theory and indeed, providing both distinct and implicit examples of each set of
processes, in practice, the headteachers acknowledged difficulty in separating leadership from management (Spillane and Coldren, 2011). As processes, they were perceived as overlapping (Bush, 2008a; Fidler, 1997; Spillane and Diamond, 2007) and complementary (Durrant, 2004; Spillane et al., 2009b) in nature. Three issues surfaced in that regard.

First, there was a degree of conceptual confusion between leadership and management (Harris and Beatty, 2004) evident in staff responses and a surprising degree of clarity in others, depending on how explicit the headteacher had been with staff about the intentions behind engaging them in leadership roles. At times there appeared a lack of alignment between the headteachers’ understandings and their staffs’, as well as a lack of awareness of staff understandings. Such conceptual confusion indicates a lack of ‘a taken-as-shared understanding’, or of a ‘working definition’, risking staff ‘talking past one another’ (Spillane and Coldren, 2011: 26). Perhaps this is not surprising, given the range of definitions of leadership apparent across the literature (MacBeath, 2004; Rost, 1991).

Second, leadership was expressed by the headteachers as occupying a higher order relationship to management, reflecting the current trend in the literature (Gunter, 2012; MacBeath, 2004; Spillane and Coldren, 2011) and policy discourse (EIS, 2010; HMIE, 2006b and 2007b). Management was viewed as functional, aligned to formal role or position. Although on the one hand there was a rationale for such distinction, it appeared to be an artificial construct (Gunter, 2004 and 2012), a convenience serving both headteacher and staff. In making the distinction, the headteachers were able to cut through possible objections for staff leadership linked to conditions of service, contractual agreements and guidance from professional bodies, in order to effect workforce reform (Gunter, 2008). They were also able to retain power and control (Duignan, 2008). For the staff, they were able to select the type and degree of engagement, protecting themselves with role boundaries and workload agreements (Murphy, 2005b). Although arguably a useful strategy, such delineation was artificial and open to manipulation. This was perhaps most notable in the third case study, where the staff referred to ‘the management’ and the headteacher recognized her complicity in that perspective and the convenience it served.
Third, although a clear distinction was made by the headteachers between delegation and distributed leadership (Hargreaves, 2005), in practice there were similarities between them (Harris, 2004a). Both were viewed as essential but discrete processes. Distributed leadership was expressed as occupying a higher order relationship to delegation. Delegation was viewed as functional; distributed leadership was viewed as strategic and morally superior. The limits within which teachers and support staff were exercising leadership indicated that on a deeper level, leadership was distributed within confined limits. Those limits were akin to delegation of responsibility for leading school improvement related to ‘curriculum’ and for ‘learning, teaching and assessment matters’ for teachers - similar to Spillane and Coldren’s (2011) focus on the core business of schools - and ‘pupil care, welfare and/or pastoral concerns’ for support staff. Duties, tasks and responsibilities appeared to be distributed rather than strategic influence, calling into question the extent of capacity building (Duignan, 2008). In effect, the headteachers had designated if not delegated safe zones for staff engagement in school leadership within which everyone was clear about purpose and expectations. This was a way of managing risk. The headteachers made a distinction (‘different levels’) between operational and strategic leadership (‘proper leadership’; ‘bigger picture’) and within that distinction, the practice of distributed leadership more frequently resided within operational leadership, akin to sophisticated delegation. In that regard, parallels could be drawn with contrived collegiality (Hargreaves, 1994: 196; 81), ‘designed to have relatively high predictability in its outcomes’, potentially ‘superficial and wasteful of [teachers’] efforts and energies’. In the case studies’ schools, contrived collegiality (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992; Hargreaves, 1994 and 2003) contained contradictory features. It was:

• Administratively regulated rather than initiated by teachers or evolving spontaneously
• Compulsory in nature
• Focused on the implementation of government or headteacher priorities
• Set in time and place
• Predictable in its outcomes

Each of the headteachers seemed clear about her philosophy in relation to educational leadership and management. Each articulated the rationale for her distributed perspective in relation to enhancing pupils’ educational provision. They
were endeavouring to build the school’s capacity through developing shared ownership over school improvement, empowering staff and engaging all staff in collective decision-making and concerted action. However, it transpired that there were clear parameters set out for such engagement. Distributed leadership was to large extent ‘in the gift of the headteacher’ within each of the three case studies. It was given, not taken (NCSL, 2004). Each school had a pattern of authority, rules and procedures (Harling, 1984). As such, leadership was functioning within a clear hierarchy. Beyond the alignment of leadership simply to formal position (Harris and Muijs, 2003), that hierarchy was manifest in the language used and the structures established.

The unintended language of hierarchy surfaced at various points across the case studies. The first headteacher made a clear distinction between members of the SMT and staff (‘aimed at us’, ‘we just need to watch that’; ‘as low down as a teacher or an auxiliary’) and the positioning of the headteacher (‘my staff’, ‘I’m really proud of them, really proud of them’). The second headteacher also referred to the positioning of her role (‘my staff’, ‘my support staff’) and the functionality of that role (‘giving’ staff responsibility; ‘allowing’, ‘encouraging’ and ‘asking’ them to take on leadership roles, ‘getting the best out of people’, ‘driving’ the improvement agenda). The third headteacher also referred to the positioning of her role (‘my school’, ‘my staff’, ‘my members of staff’, ‘my younger members of staff’, ‘my newer member of staff’, ‘my valued member of staff’, ‘my support staff’, ‘my support assistants’, ‘my probationer’, ‘little teacher’, ‘this girl’). She often used terms related to power and authority (‘given up their power’, ‘dominated’, ‘manipulation’, ‘control’, ‘devious’).

11.3 What do primary headteachers identify as the key characteristics of distributed leadership if they believe it to be embedded in the practice of their particular schools?

The understandings the headteachers had of distributed leadership had developed over a number of years and through key posts, beginning with a perspective gained from the class teacher vantage point. With one exception, they had in the main been supported along the way by headteachers acting as gatekeepers to leadership opportunities who had either encouraged them through their understanding and practice of a distributed perspective, or had been open to a new perspective on leadership and management. Regardless, there was a sense that each case study headteacher had pushed the established practices and boundaries in each school
they had previously worked. On taking up headship in their current school, each had inherited traditional structures and cultures, setting about developing a distributed perspective not previously regarded as the norm in those schools. They had also been supported by postgraduate study exposing them to a range of literature and encouraging them to reflect on practice (Argyris and Schon, 1978; Schon, 1991). As such, they had informed understandings which they were trying to develop. They distilled their knowledge and found ways to contextualise it for staff. Often the headteachers described the characteristics of distributed leadership in relation to established practices they were trying to change (i.e. in terms of what distributed leadership was not) or in terms of the style of headship/leadership they did not wish to emulate. This might have reflected the loose usage of the term distributed leadership and the lack of consensus for a definition of the term (Duignan, 2008; Harris and Spillane, 2008), along with the variety of processes (NCSL, 2004), models (MacBeath, 2005), levels (Harris, 2008), continuums (Hargreaves, 2008) and taxonomies (Gronn, 2002) prevalent within the literature. It might also have reflected the lack of empirical substance (Harris et al., 2007; Leithwood et al., 2004) and early stage of conception (Leithwood et al., 2009b) of the theoretical frame.

The headteachers made a clear distinction between operational leadership and strategic distributed leadership. In relation to the first and third case studies, established SMTs were understood to discuss matters at a strategic level; staff were understood to discuss matters at an operational level. In that regard, the headteachers were aware that whilst they regarded all staff as having a potential leadership role and most teachers had a leadership role - voluntary or assigned – some were very limited in their scope and level of influence. An individual’s leadership role could become more strategic in nature if the headteacher gauged them ready for such a role in terms of confidence and competence (Day et al., 2007b).

Beyond ensuring that staff had a sense of wellbeing, the key characteristics of distributed leadership identified through this study were found to reflect and go beyond those identified in the literature (NCSL, 2004; the work of Spillane).

Trust
Trust was fundamentally important (Dinham, 2009; Louis et al., 2009; MacBeath,
In establishing a bond between headteacher and staff it was deemed crucial that staff trust the headteacher to act within a consistent, principled and supportive approach. Furthermore, the headteacher was able to entrust staff with leadership roles through managed risk.

**Focused and Collective Effort**

Through shared vision, purpose and direction setting, there was an expectation that staff would pull together to develop a level of independence and problem solving, as well as ownership of school improvement initiatives through taking responsibility and feeling a sense of empowerment. This reflected features of ‘academic optimism’ (Hoy et al., 2006). Collective effort was in the main focused on what Spillane and Coldren (2011) would describe as the core work of the school.

**A Conducive School Culture**

On appointment, each headteacher had set about changing the culture of the school to embrace a distributed perspective (Leithwood et al., 2009c). Such efforts reflected re-culturing (Fullan, 2001; Murphy et al., 2009) designed to develop the school as a learning community with continuous staff engagement in self-evaluation, critically reflecting on practice to identify priorities for further improvement (Stoll and Fink, 1995). In so doing, they purposefully endeavoured to change how staff felt, thought and acted (MacGilchrist et al., 1995; Murphy et al., 2009). Each headteacher was less sure how permanent (Tomlinson, 2004) changes in staff behaviours were.

**Facilitative Senior Management**

Whether senior management comprised one or many, their role was to encourage, enable and support (Murphy et al., 2009). This required substantial time commitment (Leithwood et al., 2009c). A distributed perspective was possible without but not against a management team. Where in the first case study, a barrier was conceived, the headteacher worked around it until sufficient momentum and modelling of approaches had been established. The headteachers were aware that by embracing a distributed perspective, they perceived of their roles differently to other heads they had worked with (Leithwood et al., 2009c; Mayrowetz et al., 2009).

**A Developing Professional Identity**

Headteachers were required to appreciate leadership as an integral part of the role
of staff and then work with staff to develop a professional identity incorporating leadership. In so doing, staff were encouraged to take on more and go the extra mile, reflecting 'work redesign' (Louis et al., 2009: 158).

**Networks of Influence and Leadership Hubs, Layers and Divisions**

Distributed leadership was understood to be complex and multi-faceted, not easily defined or described, working through networks of influence representing norms of interaction (Murphy et al., 2009). Both formal and informal leaders formed hubs in those interactions. Informal leadership was fluid and responsive (Anderson et al., 2009; Gronn, 2000; Spillane et al., 2009b).

**Professional Identity**

A distributed perspective appeared to require a shift in the professional identity of both promoted and unpromoted staff (Leithwood et al., 2009c; Mayrowetz et al., 2009; Murphy et al., 2009), (first case study fourth interview vignette (xvi) - Appendix 2c), teachers and support staff (Carroll and Torrance, in press) (second case study fourth interview vignette (xix) - Appendix 3c; second case study third interview vignette (xix) - Appendix 3b).

**Context**

The context specific nature of distributed leadership emerged as a key characteristic (Louis, 2009; Mascall et al., 2009; Spillane and Coldren, 2011). School context played a critical role in terms of the size and structure of the school, staffing, norms of interaction and collaborative engagement. All those factors informed how the headteachers took forward their distributed perspective. The size of school in itself did not appear to make a distributive perspective more or less problematic. However, it may have more easily enabled a deeper level of engagement by support and teaching staff.

Despite their experience and understanding, on appointment to headship, nothing could be taken as a given. Each headteacher had invested significant energies to understand the school as an organization (Beare et al., 1989; Spillane and Coldren, 2011: 12), ‘to survey the school’s existing infrastructure’, getting to know its context and culture (Busher, 2001; Fidler, 1998; MacGilchrist et al., 1995; Torrington and Weighman, 1989). This enabled her to begin to take forward a distributed
perspective, step by step, setting an expectation and legitimizing actions (Bennett, 2001; Murphy et al., 2009). Gaining an in-depth knowledge and understanding of each individual staff member was key. Through developing knowledge and understanding of school context the headteachers were able to identify how ready and able each staff member was to engage in leadership processes and then harness that engagement (Day et al., 2007b). They were also able to identify and circumvent obstacles in their path (Murphy et al., 2009).

If, as would appear to be the case, a distributed perspective is context specific (Bell, 2007), it could be anticipated that the findings from each school would be unique. Indeed, there was no blueprint to follow. However, although distinct differences were identified across the three schools, perhaps more remarkable, was the cross cutting themes which emerged.

11.4 To what extent in the opinion of staff do those characteristics currently operate in their particular schools?

Despite their commitment, insight and postgraduate study, all three headteachers were still learning how to take forward a distributed perspective on leadership and management within the context of their current school (Louis et al., 2009; Mascall et al., 2009). Their learning was situated within the school as a learning organization (Hayes et al., 2004: Senge, 2006), sharing many features of diagnosis and design explored by Spillane and Coldren (2011). All staff appeared to be learning in context how to take a distributed perspective forward, under the stewardship of each headteacher (Anderson et al., 2009; Day, 2009; Hallinger and Heck, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2009c; Murphy et al., 2009). Distributed leadership did not appear to be a single entity but rather, comprised layers and divisions, adapted in accordance to circumstance and purpose (Spillane and Coldren, 2011). Patterns of influence changed according to location of activity, the semi-private context of the classroom, or the public arena outwith the classroom.

By nature, distributed leadership was socially constructed (Spillane, 2005a), an active process, involving negotiating meanings. Through distributing leadership and to a lesser extent accountability, the headteacher’s role focused on influence through professional expertise and moral imperatives rather than line management authority (Bell, 2007). More than any other colleague, staff in each school approached the headteacher for advise and support across the sociograms. The headteachers were
careful to articulate with staff the fundamental principles to their distributed perspective (Harris and Lambert, 2003): the broad based involvement of staff and staff development opportunities, agency to influence and change.

A distributed perspective was work in progress, not yet deeply embedded in school practice. The results from the 360° staff questionnaire provided a lens through which each headteacher could examine the lived reality from the perspective of their staff (Spillane and Coldren, 2011). The key characteristics of distributed leadership were found to be at various stages of development.

**Trust**
Individual and collective bonds of trust between headteacher and staff had developed to differing extents. There was a fragility which surfaced at points. Even where strong bonds seemed established, this was not necessarily mirrored in other relationships, particularly between teaching and support staff. Support staff seemed most secure in their leadership role in the second case study’s school, more secure than the teachers. There was not yet a feeling of shared accountability.

**Focused and Collective Effort**
In the main, the leadership of teachers was classroom focused whereas the leadership of support staff was focused outwith the classroom. Collective engagement seemed most secure in the first and least secure in the third case study’s school. Reciprocity of influence was most evident in the second case study’s school. The headteachers set the boundaries for focused and collective effort.

**A Conducive School Culture**
This was developing but was not found to be either established or consistent. Each new member of staff required to be socialised into that culture (Simon, 1991). There was vulnerability evident through the headteachers’ continued effort not to jeopardise progress made, and through their expressed reservations if a new headteacher was appointed with a top-down approach.

**Facilitative Senior Management**
The role of the headteacher and to a lesser extent the depute, was paramount in progressing a distributed perspective (Anderson et al., 2009; Day, 2009; Dinham,
2009; Hallinger and Heck, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2009c; Mascall et al., 2009; Mayrowetz et al., 2009; Murphy et al., 2009; Timperley, 2009). Within the three case studies, a distributed perspective still represented a top-down approach within which, headteachers legitimized the leadership engagement of staff. They initiated facilitative processes and structures. They invited and encouraged staff to take up leadership roles.

**A Developing Professional Identity**

Staff responses indicated that for some staff, leadership was not considered an integral part of their professional identity. Some staff in each school did not perceive themselves to play a leadership role (Murphy et al., 2009). Some staff found it difficult to step into a leadership role (Slater, 2008). Although specific to each context, there was incongruence between the headteachers’ view and the support staffs’ view of the leadership role they played. All three headteachers recognised this as an aspect for further development.

**Networks of Influence and Leadership Hubs, Layers and Divisions**

Each headteacher and to a lesser extent the deputes (who, where present, had a less extensive and less strategic leadership role) represented a leadership hub in the flows of influence amongst staff. Other hubs varied according to the nature of advice and support sought. Informal leaders did not represent static positions, but rather leadership roles and patterns of influence developed ‘fit for purpose’, changing in relation to what support and advice was being sought (Spillane and Coldren, 2011). Informal leaders were not afforded their influence through friendship or assigned role but rather through credibility with peers and appreciated expertise in relation to specific aspects of school work, similar to Wenger’s (2000) communities of practice. Respect for colleagues could be engendered through close working relationships past and present such as stage partners or department colleagues. As a general rule, support staff did not have the same access to or ability to create networks. Where support staff represented a leadership hub, that role tended to be defined, specific and contained, particularly in the first and third case study headteachers’ schools.

**Professional Identity within Context**

Within the boundaries negotiated for the distributed perspective of each school, there
was little evidence of a bottom-up approach to school improvement. Teachers were still waiting for permission to act and then acting within agreed parameters. Support staff could have a leadership role in ‘whole school’ areas but not within the classroom. Distributed leadership overwhelmingly focused on priorities from the school’s improvement plan or the headteacher’s priorities which provided coherence, consensus and a strategy for the use of finite resources. However, it also limited the scope for spontaneous leadership or for a grass roots change agenda promoted by current policy rhetoric. It is difficult to envisage how such discourse can become a reality, while staff perceive the need for their actions to be sanctioned by the headteacher. What did not emerge from the findings was a sense of teachers or support staff identifying for themselves through critical reflection, aspects of their practice that they identified as requiring improvement, then collaborating with colleagues to experiment with practice and identify solutions to issues identified. Rather, the headteachers were endeavouring to develop an enquiry stance with staff, focused on agreed priorities.

Three key layers were playing themselves out within established hierarchies: the senior management layer; the teacher layer; the support staff layer.

11.4.1 The Senior Management Layer

Across the sociograms for each school, regardless of how many other leadership roles were identified, the leadership role of management team members dominated. Above all, the headteachers played the key leadership role (Anderson et al., 2009; Day, 2009; Dinham, 2009; Hallinger and Heck, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2009c; Mascall et al., 2009; Mayrowetz et al., 2009; Murphy et al., 2009; Timperley, 2009). Still developing within that role, the headteachers appeared very much the driving force behind a distributed perspective, motivated by the positive impact distributed leadership was perceived to have had on the ‘softer indicators’ such as staff wellbeing, satisfaction and creativity (Bush, 2003a), morale (Day et al., 2009) or ‘academic optimism’ (Hoy et al., 2006), in addition to perceived impact of leadership on pupil learning experiences and outcomes (Day et al., 2007b; NCSL, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2006). Each headteacher focused on capitalizing staff potential for the benefit of pupils. Distributed leadership was perceived as working for the common good (‘democratic’ - Gronn, 2009a). On the other hand, it was perceived as a mechanism for capitalising on the strengths and potential of staff to develop the
most effective organisation possible, encouraging staff to ‘buy into’ school improvement measures (Gunter, 2004). In that regard, headteacher influence was indirect and mediated through the exercise of teacher leadership (Harris and Muijs, 2003; Leithwood et al., 1996). Often, there was an underlying implication of exploitation (Fitzgerald and Gunter, 2006) articulated in statements such as: ‘you can get a lot more out of people’; ‘you just get more done’.

The third headteacher recognized that there was potential ‘manipulation’ of staff, resonating contrived collegiality (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992; Hargreaves, 1994). Perhaps more so than the other two headteachers, she identified a number of complexities and tensions inherent within a distributed perspective (Spillane and Coldren, 2011). She regarded there was a ‘convenience’ in aligning management to formal position (Gunter, 2004 and 2012; Fitzgerald and Gunter, 2008). Such alignment enabled staff to opt in and out of leadership responsibilities. It also enabled her to borrow weight from external pressures and expectations brought to bear on her and in turn the staff. Counter intuitive to that position, was the risk that despite substantial middle-leader activity, there could be little tangible outcome (Bell, 2007).

The headteachers recognized that they were ultimately accountable. That created tensions (Hargreaves, 2008) and could make it difficult for them to let go of power and control (NCSL, 2004). This perhaps reflected Pascal and Ribbins (1998) findings that until headteachers reach the stage of autonomy around eight years into post, they may not have the confidence to advocate a collegial or teamwork approach. The headteachers perceived tensions involved in entrusting staff with leadership roles, whilst maintaining order and control (Harris, 2005; Harris, 2007). The third headteacher was most explicit in that regard, frequently referring to taking ‘risks’, reflecting a difficulty in accepting changes in power (Leithwood et al., 2009c). She was well aware of the danger of anarchy and confusion (NCSL, 2004). This, despite being critical of a top-down management style and to the previous ‘locked down’ potential of staff she had inherited. All three headteachers established boundaries to distributed leadership, encouraging staff to focus on improving the quality of pupil experience. In that regard, the scope of staff influence was more operational in nature. They were involved in small rather than big decisions, approaching SMT for strategic advice and support.
11.4.2 The Teacher Layer

The headteachers were intentionally developing with teachers an enhanced professional identity incorporating a leadership role (Burton and Brundrett, 2005; Hatfield, 1989; Murphy et al., 2009; Wilmore, 2007). They recognised the traditional view of a teacher, bound by classroom context (Barth, 1988; Murphy, 2005b) and were engaged in widening that view. Where identified, they harnessed the understandings of a distributed perspective and encouraged teachers enthusiastic to engage. They also recognized the need to support less enthusiastic or less confident teachers (Slater, 2008). They sought opportunities and overcame recognised barriers (Barth, 2001; Murphy, 2005b; Murphy et al., 2009; Smylie, 1992; Snell and Swanson, 2000).

The stage of development reached was unique to each teacher. There was a spectrum of understanding and engagement evident. For some teachers, taking on a leadership role was not considered part of their professional identity. Others did not perceive themselves to be leaders although colleagues might, or did not perceive their leadership role to be significant. Others were comfortable in their leadership role but still seemed to consider leadership additional to their teacher remit. As the first headteacher observed, ‘the perception within the profession [is] that everything needs to be allocated hours’. Even where the headteachers felt there had been a clear change in teachers’ professional identity, they were not certain how established or ‘permanent’ those changes were. Potentially, that meant with a new headteacher, teachers could revert back to their previous role within a top-down management style. The first headteacher suggested that the professional identity of teachers within the school had not yet extended to ‘teacher as leader’.

Leaders and their patterns of influence varied depending on what aspect of ‘school work’ was the focus. That said, the focus for teacher leadership and their influence was predominantly related to the curriculum and to teaching, learning and assessment (Crowther, 2009; Hargreaves, 2009; Harris and Muijs, 2003; Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001; Miller et al., 2000; Spillane et al., 2007; York-Barr and Duke, 2004). In this way, teachers’ influence was operational. Such parameters appeared both set by the headteacher in legitimising the nature of leadership roles for teachers, and set by the teachers themselves. For headteachers this ensured the
school improvement agenda was prioritized and progressed within defined boundaries. Teachers generally did not seek a more strategic leadership role.

Such a distinction led to a degree of creativity within a compliance culture. Such a position was safe for all involved. When taking forward a public school leadership role, it seemed necessary to have a designated title, endorsed by the headteacher, to legitimize that role and actions taken within that role. Teachers were waiting for permission to act, then acting within clearly defined boundaries and organizational structures (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001).

11.4.3 The Support Staff Layer
The headteachers held the support staff in high regard. There appeared to be a mutual regard between support staff and headteachers enabling support staff to act with a degree of autonomy within their remits. However, although the headteachers believed support staff made a significant contribution to the leadership of the school, that view was not reflected in staff responses. In the main, teachers did not share the headteachers’ view. Beyond ‘pupil care, welfare and/or personal concerns’ for which support staff appeared to have a legitimized leadership role (perceived as the expert in providing long standing support for a high tariff child) as a general rule, teachers did not approach support staff regularly for advice and support. Individual support staff might therefore be perceived as having a clearly defined, contained, specific leadership role.

Across the case studies, a division surfaced within established hierarchies with respect to distinct differences between the patterns of influence and leadership hubs of teaching and non-teaching staff. The first headteacher became concerned about an apparent dislocation of support staff from the patterns of teacher leadership influence. She felt there was a hierarchy at play within which support staff could not have an influencing discussion with teachers. The second case study headteacher had purposefully developed the role of support staff to the point where they had a public leadership role but that had created tensions between teaching and support staff. The third case study headteacher became concerned about a dual role played out by support staff, often observed as more leaderly than many teachers within the public spaces of the school but subservient to teachers within classrooms. There was a lack of recognition that support staff could play a significant leadership role of
different but equal status (Carroll and Torrance, in press). Furthermore, teachers did not perceive themselves to have a role in developing the leadership capacity of support staff. This could in part be due to the lack of training for such responsibility within initial teacher education (Calder and Grieve, 2004) and in-service training (Blatchford et al., 2009; Mistry et al., 2004).

Common across the case studies was the observation by the headteachers that the line management of support staff needed to be improved (Mistry et al., 2004). The headteachers felt the need to establish an understanding with staff of the role of support staff within their distributed perspective. Related to that was the need to clarify the role of the learning support teacher and business manager. Associated with that, was the need for ongoing professional development (Blatchford et al., 2009).

11.5 How do those primary headteachers think those characteristics have come about? (e.g. naturally and/or purposely planned for)

A distributed perspective had not been thought to be naturally occurring but rather, had and continued to require sustained effort on the part of a considerable number of staff. To large extent, distributed leadership was found to be ‘in the gift of the headteacher’, who paced the rate and extent of leadership distributed, maintained an overview and quality assured the process. The engagement of teachers, and indeed support staff, in leadership roles had not happened by chance (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001; Killion, 1996; Murphy et al., 2009; Slater, 2008). It had come about through purposeful planning on the part of the three headteachers. In each of the schools they had played a leadership role, past and present, they had pushed the boundaries of established practice, taking incremental steps to reach increasing depths of distributed leadership. They did so by setting clear expectations that distributed leadership would develop, modelling the processes inherent in a distributed perspective, utilising enabling processes, devising enabling strategies, and developing enabling structures. They made deliberate decisions and took practical actions. They appreciated that teacher leadership needed support (Harris and Muijs, 2004; Murphy, 2005b).

That said it was not necessarily easy for each headteacher to identify or articulate how the characteristics of a distributed perspective had come about. Hardly surprising given that, ‘how leadership is distributed and with what effect is relatively
uncharted territory’ (Harris and Spillane, 2008: 32). The narrative nature of the second interview and the open-ended discussions of the third (focused on the 360° outcomes) and the fourth (focused on the sociograms) supported their reflections in that regard. This shared similarities with ‘sense-making’ as described by Spillane and Coldren (2011: 7), whereby conditions were created to enable headteachers to ‘switch from automatic to conscious processing’. In so doing, the headteachers were supported through ‘reflection-in-practice… to take notice of the taken-for-granted aspects of school life’ (Spillane and Coldren, 2011: 19).

All three headteachers had taken up post in schools where a top-down leadership and management style was established. It had taken around two years to reach a point on the distributed leadership spectrum. Each headteacher recognized the role they had played in developing a distributed perspective. The first acknowledged, ‘I see my influence’. The second perceived distributed leadership was ‘enabled and facilitated’ by her. The third compared the headteacher’s role to that of the ‘queen bee’, recognizing that ‘sometimes you support the bit you don’t want to see by the way you behave’. Their influence had been key in ‘always nurturing’ a distributed perspective. The headteachers appeared to be continuously negotiating their position with individual and collective staff. Leadership was still top-down, despite the rhetoric of teams and empowerment (Gunter, 2003).

At a basic level, there was an expectation either on the part of staff, the headteacher or both, that time should be made available for non-promoted staff to take forward a leadership role (Murphy et al., 2009). Time was negotiated collectively through collegiate time agreements or the timetabling of staff activities, individually in response to members of staff stepping into recognised roles such as curriculum coordinators, and individually on an ad hoc basis. This reflects the middle leadership literature: success of formal and informal middle leaders is thought to be dependent on non-contact time provided to facilitate role and status (Bell, 2007; Fitzgerald et al., 2006). It was the headteachers who had ultimate responsibility for assigning staff and through doing so, setting the conditions for staff to develop positive regard for each other’s ability. And, it was the headteacher who had ultimate responsibility for the recruitment and selection of staff.
At a deeper level, the headteachers negotiated the focus for and parameters of leadership engagement, which could be construed as new managerialism (Gunter, 2004, 2008 and 2012). The influence of the headteachers was disproportionate (Barth, 2001). Incremental steps were taken, building staff confidence, responding to perceived level of need. They gauged the pace of change and timing of change, collectively and for individual staff. They did so through setting an expectation but knew that was insufficient of itself. Each headteacher identified ways in which they actively harnessed understandings of a distributed perspective as well as staff enthusiasm, engaging less confident or enthusiastic members of staff, recognizing and overcoming potential barriers to that perspective, modelling and scaffolding processes for staff. They were vigilant for opportunities to engage staff, including pitching opportunities to areas of interest. They were the gatekeepers to and facilitators of such opportunities (Murphy et al., 2009). They sanctioned leadership roles and provided legitimization to leadership activity. They provided staff with a safety net to minimize risk and supported staff when problems were encountered. They invested time developing staff capability, they tapped individuals on shoulders and encouraged them to step forward, they adjusted the level of expectation and support perceived to be required, to maximize the leadership potential of individual staff members. In so doing, they created a ripple effect, working towards a critical mass or tipping point.

At a strategic level, the headteachers understood that in order to capitalize on the influence exerted by leaders and followers, it was vital staff had an understanding of the direction set for school improvement and the underpinning school vision and values (Senge, 2006). On appointment, each headteacher had prioritised developing such understanding with their staff. Thereafter, they had set about developing what Spillane (Spillane and Coldren, 2011: 40; Spillane et al., 2011) would term organizational tools and routines, contributing to the ‘situation’ or environment, by framing staff interactions and creating infrastructures for distributed leadership.

Organizational tools enabled organizational routines to function. All three case study headteachers utilized the collegiate time agreement in the way they thought best to engage staff and focus their efforts. The first case study headteacher had a published list of all staff, each having been assigned a leadership role. The second case study headteacher had drawn up a formalised timetable which enabled support
staff to have non-contact time for progressing leadership roles, making much use of the title ‘co-ordinator’ to raise the profile of informal leaders in committees and groups charged with making important decisions. The third case study headteacher had developed policies with staff for a range of aspects of schoolwork.

Organizational routines were evident in each school designed to pull staff together and focus their collective efforts on improving learning and teaching. All three case study headteachers sought and developed strategies for collaborative school improvement, putting in place structures such as committees and working groups. They emphasized the role of CPD and the professional development review process. They made purposeful use of the different stages of the school improvement planning process. They intentionally engaged teaching and to a lesser extent support staff in on-going self-evaluation processes. The first case study headteacher had established an extended management team and leadership group. The second case study headteacher had a sophisticated set of processes for on-going self-evaluation and made extensive use of coordinator roles at school and cluster levels. The third case study headteacher had developed design briefs to support and guide the progression of school improvement initiatives and had been fully supportive of the principles behind the ‘staff huddle’.

11.6 What do primary headteachers (and their staff) perceive as the benefits and/or problems arising from operating a distributed perspective in practice?

The headteachers and their staff perceived a number of benefits arising from operating a distributed perspective in practice. The overriding benefit was a belief that a distributed perspective impacted positively on pupils’ school experience. More specifically, distributed leadership was thought to lead to a faster pace of change, and subsequently to embedded and sustainable change, particularly in relation to curricular matters, and teaching, learning and assessment matters in the case of teachers, and to pupil care, welfare and pastoral concerns in the case of support staff. This, they felt, was achieved through developing a sense of community within which staff developed positive relationships, were happier or at least positive about their role and its contribution, and were motivated in that regard.

Distributed leadership was therefore seen to bring school benefits of both an operational and strategic nature. It was also perceived as bringing personal benefits
to both the headteacher and staff. For the headteacher, available time was targeted more strategically to focus on capacity building, differentiating support provided to staff in leadership roles. There was also a practical element to that in, for example, encouraging staff to make fundamental decisions for themselves. In a small school setting, distributed leadership was regarded as essential. For the staff, leadership experience was perceived as developing confidence. Staff were encouraged to share knowledge and expertise in order to develop the school as a learning community (Murphy et al., 2009). Many hands were also perceived to make lighter work.

The headteachers and their staff also perceived a number of potential problems linked to taken-for-granted assumptions. Indeed, the findings from this study challenge certain taken for granted assumptions often held in the theoretical, policy and practice frames of reference. Those assumptions include: that every staff member is able to lead; that every staff member wishes to lead; that the leadership role of staff is legitimized simply by the headteacher’s endorsement; that a distributed perspective occurs naturally; that a distributed perspective is unproblematic.

11.6.1 Assumption 1: That Every Member of Staff is Able to Lead

Popular discourse suggests that leadership should be integral to the role of every teacher. The leadership literature presents a range of views as to whether all teachers are capable of a leadership role (Harris and Muijs, 2004) or not (Greenfield, 1995; Lord and Maher, 1993). A specific set of skills is often promoted (Murphy, 2005b; Pellicer and Anderson, 1995). Indeed, the headteachers in this study focused considerable efforts on developing the leadership capabilities of their staff, with an expectation that each would in some way contribute to school leadership (Harris, 2005). However, as the study progressed and the headteachers reflected on the lived reality within each school, they became more candid about the leadership abilities of staff.

Beyond the public declarations, there was an appreciation that leadership did not come naturally to many staff, particularly since previous top-down management was felt to have stifled staff leadership. The headteachers recognized that for some staff, a leadership role did not come easy and for others, it might never fully develop. Not
all teachers or support staff had the confidence to lead colleagues. Some were perceived as not having the right personality or interpersonal ability (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2008). For others, personal or family circumstances meant it unrealistic to expect that they would undertake a leadership role consistently throughout their career. For others, their aspirations lay elsewhere. Perhaps it is unrealistic to conceive that all teachers can engage in leadership roles consistently throughout their career (Crowther, 2009).

The headteachers differentiated their support and encouragement (Day et al., 2007b) in relation to each member of staff's enthusiasm and ability to engage in leadership processes and practices. Leadership was perceived as learned processes and learning required support and experience. As the first headteacher phrased it,

…it’s like teaching a child I suppose, you just respond to the need that they have at the time. So that would be the same with the staff…

By encouraging staff to engage in leadership, the headteachers articulated taking a measured risk. That could create anxiety for them. Staff also required taking a measured risk, trusting that their actions would be supported by colleagues and by the headteacher. That sense of trust was not always secure.

11.6.2 Assumption 2: That Every Member of Staff Wishes to Lead

Within the policy discourse and theoretical frame, it is often implied or assumed that every member of staff wishes to lead. Even within the second case study’s school, where staff were engaged in leadership roles more consistently than in the other two schools, that was not found to be the case. Indeed, the headteachers recognized resistance on the part of a small number of staff to engage in leadership roles (Gunter, 2003; Martin, 2002). As the second headteacher expressed, some staff would ‘rather not be leading’ and as the third headteacher expressed, ‘there are people who don’t want a leadership role’. That finding is consistent with the work of MacBeath (2004), Murphy et al. (2009) and Tomlinson (2004).

Furthermore, leadership did not appear to be perceived by teachers or support staff as an integral part of their role. They expected additional time to be made available and to different extents, the headteachers agreed. Other staff could resent the resistance of colleagues unwilling to share the school leadership burden. Leadership
appeared to be perceived as a ‘opt in’ or ‘add on’. That meant staff goodwill could be withdrawn at any point, adding to the process of constant negotiation the headteachers were engaged in with staff. National and local agreements on teacher workload could be as stifling as they were enabling. Headteachers worked around such potential obstacles through their articulation of core values, rehearsal of shared vision, framing of leadership roles as affording professional development opportunities, demonstrating their own commitment and hard work, interpersonal ability and knowledge of each individual staff member.

Maintaining positive relationships was key but not easy when each headteacher was also challenging staff to constantly improve the quality of provision for pupils. There was a sense that the headteachers were maintaining a careful balance and at times, walking a tightrope. They could expect and encourage staff to lead but could not force them to do so. They found ways to involve resistant staff in more minor or operational roles, working with rather than leading colleagues. As the second headteacher articulated,

\[
\text{the only thing that is for myself ... probably [the] most challenging is when you have teachers who just don’t want to lead something.}
\]

11.6.3 Assumption 3: That the Leadership Role of Staff is Legitimized Simply by the Headteacher’s Endorsement

As discussed under the first research question, distributed leadership was found largely to be ‘in the gift of the headteacher’. However, the headteacher’s endorsement was not sufficient of itself to legitimize the leadership role of staff. In order for staff to have an influencing role, they were required to be perceived by peers as meriting that role. Experience in itself was not enough. Expertise was prized and that expertise extended to competence in relation to supporting adults (Gehrke, 1991; Murphy, 2005b).

Not every staff member perceived to be a leader by the headteacher perceived themselves to be a leader, even if they had a title such as ‘coordinator’ or a position such as chair of a working group. Not every staff member perceived to be a leader by the headteacher was perceived by peers to be one. Not every staff member with line management responsibility for other staff was perceived by those they line managed to have a leadership role or a strategic leadership role, particularly apposite with regard to the line management of support staff. Colleagues identified
by peers as having an influencing role did not always reflect the assumptions of the headteachers, although on further reflection, they could explain why that influencing role had perhaps developed. Teacher leaders were required to be perceived by their peers as effective practitioners (Burton and Brundrett, 2005; Muijs and Harris, 2003; Harris and Muijs, 2004; Murphy, 2005b; Snell and Swanson, 2000). Calling someone a leader did not make that person a leader. Withholding such patronage did not stop it being bestowed.

The leadership role of support staff within the semi-private spaces of the classroom appeared particularly problematic. Even when entrusted with key leadership roles within the school’s public spaces, teachers represented classroom leadership. Even, in the case of the second case study, when teachers seemed to value the leadership role of support staff, when that role became very public, tensions surfaced.

11.6.4 Assumption 4: That a Distributed Perspective Occurs Naturally
Within the policy discourse and a particular section of the literature, distributed leadership is presented as naturally occurring – the tap simply needs to be switched on for leadership to flow and distribute itself across school staff. However, the reality from the perspective of the three headteachers in this study was somewhat different. If the view of each headteacher was accurate – and there was nothing in the reported lived experiences of the staff suggesting otherwise – then, on appointment, each had set about changing the leadership and management of the school from a top-down to a distributed perspective. It had taken over two years for each headteacher to reach a stage of distributed leadership with their staff. Nothing in their descriptions would concur with the view that a distributed perspective occurs naturally. As discussed under the previous research question, the characteristics of distributed leadership were very much purposely planned.

Although not sufficient in itself, the headteachers’ endorsement was key. This is consistent with the literature, proposing that teacher leadership is dependent on strong and supportive headteachers to thrive and have impact (Barth, 2001; Blegen and Kennedy, 2000; Burton and Brundrett, 2005; Bush, 2003a; Crowther et al., 2009; Murphy, 2005b; Murphy et al., 2009; Slater, 2008; Smylie et al., 2002). Had different headteachers been appointed to the three schools with a different perspective on leadership, then the leadership practices in those schools might be very different.
Indeed, if new headteachers were appointed, each had reservations for the extent to which their distributed perspective would prevail. The headteachers in this study were well informed and had a particular frame of reference, helping to guide them through uncharted territory. They learned how to take forward a distributed perspective as they reflected in and on practice (Agyris and Schon, 1978; Schon, 1991). They learned with their staff and they continued to learn, drawing from participation in this study to sharpen their focus, deepen their understandings and identify next steps for the development of their distributed perspective. That process very much reflected the process of diagnosis and design discussed by Spillane and Coldren (2011).

11.6.5 Assumption 5: That a Distributed Perspective is Unproblematic
Within the policy discourse and a particular section of the literature, distributed leadership is presented as unproblematic (Duignan, 2008). However, in this study a distributed perspective on leadership and management was found to be problematic in a number of ways and for a number of reasons (Harris, 2007; Timperley, 2009). In the words of the third headteacher, ‘distributed leadership could become a bit sticky’.

A range of issues and tensions emerged specific to each school context, hardly surprising with the degree of boundary crossing involved (Harris, 2005; Harris et al., 2007). With the first case study, there was a friction between some staff, an anxiety amongst some staff, resistance on the part of some staff to both take on a leadership role and towards members of staff who had already done so. There were tensions as teacher identity was undergoing an apparent change. With the second case study’s school, there were practical concerns with a small staff team taking on the workload of a range of leadership roles. There was also potential for friction between teaching and support staff, resistance on the part of a small number of staff to taking on a leadership role, difficulties arising from individual’s personality traits, and an expectation that additional time should be given for the undertaking of leadership roles. With the third case study, the headteacher repeatedly referred to tensions related to balancing staff autonomy and her control (‘you only give people enough rope to hang themselves, and not the school’), experienced and less experienced members of staff were treated differently in that regard. There was a dislocation between support and teaching staff, a number of staff appearing isolated in that regard. Across the case studies, there was a difference in perspective in relation to
how much autonomy staff had. The first and second headteachers felt staff had more autonomy in decision-making processes than staff themselves reflected, whereas the third headteacher was well aware of the limits to staff autonomy, since full autonomy would 'just be chaos'.

The third headteacher more than the others, explored a number of complexities and tensions inherent within a distributed perspective. Those were discussed under the third research question. Contributing to the problematic nature of a distributed perspective was a lack of consensus as to: what staff meant by leadership and distributed leadership; what it means to lead colleagues; what expectations could reasonably be placed on SMT members, teachers and support staff.

11.7 Conclusion

This chapter focused on an analysis of the findings in relation to the five research questions, drawing from the literature review chapters to inform that analysis. A great deal was learned from the design, implementation and analysis of this study, leading to a better understanding of what needs to be explored further, both in terms of the research process and in terms of the focus for the study. A better understanding also developed as to the limitations within the field of educational leadership in general and the area of distributed leadership more specifically. A better informed view of the complex and multi-faceted nature of distributed leadership developed, as being not easily defined or described, and full of contradictions at both theoretical and practice levels. That enhanced understanding should inform my work in supporting both formal and informal school leaders as they strive to develop their practice and the practice of their schools.

The final chapter of this thesis endeavours to pull together the learning resulting through the culmination of this study. In a modest way, it offers a contribution to contemporary discourse around educational leadership. The implications of key findings are offered in relation to a specific space and time, within a distinct policy period for Scottish schools.
Chapter Twelve: Conclusion

12.1 Introduction

The earlier chapters of this thesis provided a review of the literature relating to a distributed perspective on leadership. Considerable conceptual confusion was identified, rooted in the genealogy of the field of educational leadership. Chapter three argued the development of educational leadership as a unique field was premised on ‘highly dubious and problematic assumptions’ (Gronn, 2003b: 269). However, the positioning of educational before leadership serves to make clear the focus, nature and purpose of the activity as distinct from organizational leadership rooted in business management. Its uniqueness focuses on the promotion of effective teaching and learning (Bush, 2008b). That said, educational leadership has drawn from various disciplines, heavily influenced by wider social, economic and political factors leading to many taken for granted assumptions (Gunter, 2005).

School leadership is plagued by conceptual confusion (Harris and Beatty, 2004). Competing goals behind the development of the field have led to tensions and contradictions. Chapter four argued the elevated position leadership enjoyed was little short of new managerialism, enabling headteachers to take forward national policy directives through influencing relationships, with new inclusive language. Leadership was associated with transformational change; management was downgraded (Gunter, 2004). The hero charismatic lone leader proved ineffectual in bringing about government improvement measures. A school leadership model was sought to facilitate sustained change and lasting improvement, through a distributed perspective. Its construction was based on what it was not, rather than on what it was empirically shown to be.

Distributed leadership as an idea developed from collegial models, collegiality originated from management models. This perhaps explains why, although the rhetoric promotes teams and empowerment, the model remains top-down (Gunter, 2003). It could be argued that delegated management was cloaked as distributed leadership, focused on performance management rather than educational leadership (Gunter, 2004). Chapter five identified that the emphasis on leadership and distributed leadership was part of a policy direction, seeking workforce reform (Gunter, 2008 and 2012).
Defining distributed leadership proves problematic. Various terms have been promoted such as distributed, distributive and dispersed leadership (MacBeath, 2004), with little conceptual clarity. Although the same term may be used, a variety of meanings may be ascribed to distributed leadership (Duignan, 2008). This brings with it the danger of staff ‘talking past one another’ (Spillane and Coldren, 2011: 26) or worse, the danger of competing understandings and motivations.

Teacher leadership becomes necessary but potentially problematic within a distributed perspective. Chapter six argued that understandings of teacher leadership are still developing, representing ‘a theory in action’ (Murphy, 2005b: 46). Little of the limited literature available on teacher leadership (MacBeath, 2004) is based on empirical understandings. Conceptual confusion is again apparent in relation to teacher leadership (Muijs and Harris, 2003). The focus for teacher leadership is often positioned as transforming curriculum and pedagogy (Hargreaves, 2009), without the identification of requisite collaborative processes or relationships between teacher leaders and colleagues, teacher leaders and formal leaders. Consequently, opportunities for and expectations of teacher leadership relationships are little understood. Lack of clarity is also apparent in the parameters for role definition. Such ambiguity brings with it inherent tensions.

This study set out to explore the experiences and perceptions of early career primary headteachers progressing a distributed perspective on school leadership and management. Beyond contemporary educational rhetoric, school leadership literature and policy discourse, the problematic nature of distributed leadership surfaced at various points of the research process. How the headteachers made sense of a distributed perspective, their role and motivations remained prominent throughout, explored through the three case study chapters and the chapter concerned with the analysis of the findings.

Overall, the study’s methods were successful in enabling its aim to be met. Through its small-scale empirical research using interpretative enquiring with aspects of a grounded approach, a depth of understanding was reached, focusing on three headteacher case studies. Those headteachers had a voice through a sequence of in-depth, semi-structured and narrative style interviews. The case study approach
was essentially ethnographic and ‘personal narrative’. The study extended beyond self-reporting as staff perceptions of school leadership and management were also elicited through a 360° analysis, a semi-structured questionnaire exploring the extent to which leadership was distributed within each school. The 360° questionnaire incorporated a sociometric analysis of the leadership relationships within the school. The third and fourth interviews focused on the headteacher’s interpretations of the implications of the questionnaire data and social networks evident within the sociograms.

This final chapter draws together the main understandings arising from the study. It begins with a brief review of the focus for the research and its main findings, as presented in detail in earlier chapters. It then discusses the original contribution made to knowledge of distributed leadership, first in relation to existing theoretical knowledge and second in relation to existing empirical knowledge. The main similarities and differences between this study and the research undertaken by Jim Spillane are discussed. A number of recommendations are identified for policy makers, school leaders at all levels and leadership development programmes. Recommendations for future research are made in relation to theoretical development, identifying the significance of the findings for future research, as well as the methodological challenges, shortcomings in the research design and implications for future research. The limitations of the study affecting the validity or transferable analytic generalisation of the findings are recognized. The final summary and conclusion calls for a reconceptualisation of school leadership practice and processes, leading to a descriptive term that more accurately describes the lived reality.

12.2 Contribution to Knowledge
This study makes a small and modest contribution to knowledge of distributed leadership, first in relation to existing theoretical knowledge and second in relation to existing empirical knowledge.

12.2.1 The Original Contribution Made to Existing Theoretical Knowledge
The literature review chapters for this thesis were particularly challenging to construct. The main challenges related to making sense of the plethora of material available. Locating the ‘golden thread’ linking the literature review chapters, and
identifying its significance for the study as a whole proved illusive. The bold and yet competing voices emanating from the theory were often confusing and at times intimidating. The iterative, semi-grounded nature of the study both helped and hindered the process of theory building.

Perhaps in despair, a point was reached where consideration was given to whether the reason for such frustration was perhaps due to the absence of a golden thread within the theory. That led to the consideration that there might be fatal flaws in the theory itself. Ironically, that became the golden thread – below the surface noise, a whisper could be heard which dared to suggest that the emperor wore few if any clothes. The theory of distributed leadership is normative, aspirational and grounded on foundations which, when exposed to the reality of practice proves problematic. The literature review sought to trace back through the policy context and genealogy of the field of educational leadership, to enable the conceptualisation of the construction behind and positioning of school leadership, distributed leadership and teacher leadership. Teacher leadership formed a later addition to the development of the golden thread, since it was only during the first case study that its significance became clear. Through that process, it became possible to identify distributed leadership, its meanings, intentions and practice.

This study contributes to existing theoretical knowledge by recognizing various confusions and their root causes within the distributed leadership theory. Those conceptual confusions surfaced at various points of the study, requiring continuous negotiation by headteachers, teachers and support staff. Identifying how they did so contributes to the limited empirically based theory available.

The findings would suggest, in relation to the three case studies that formal and informal leaders enacted different and complementary roles. This goes further than the pioneering work of Spillane (explained in detail through a review of the literature), with its focus on routines and leadership and management practice, to begin to illuminate the role of the headteacher within a distributive perspective, coupled with experience and perceptions of the headteacher within that role. In so doing, the study makes a small contribution to the development of the theoretical base. Headteachers focused on organizational and strategic leadership; informal leaders focused on leadership for learning either directly in the case of teachers, or
indirectly in the case of support staff. The deputes’ focus was located between the focus of the headteacher and informal leaders. The headteacher’s influence would appear key to the processes and the legitimation of roles within a distributed perspective. Far from developing naturally, the headteacher’s role required intent and significant commitment.

12.2.2 The Original Contribution Made to Existing Empirical Knowledge

This study represents original empirical work. Although much has been written, very few empirical studies have explored distributed leadership (Leithwood et al., 2009a and 2009c), fewer have focused on the headteacher’s experience and perceptions of taking forward a distributed perspective. Perhaps this can be explained in relation to the rejection of the hero charismatic leader model since, in the promotion of other leadership models, the spotlight was turned away from the headteacher. With few exceptions, the empirical studies conducted do not focus sufficiently if at all on the role of the headteacher. Neither do they focus sufficiently on the operationalisation of the teacher leader role, even though empirical understandings of teacher leadership serve to inform and illuminate how distributed leadership operates in schools (Muijs and Harris, 2003). One of the main exceptions to that trend is the work conducted by Jim Spillane. Over a number of years, Spillane has undertaken several studies within which formal school leaders are placed at the centre, and teacher leader roles are explored.

The research undertaken for this study was not dissimilar to that used by Spillane. Most notable was its use of a distributed perspective as an analytical framework, a lens with which to view practice. This study involved working with formal leaders to support their efforts in understanding the school as a ‘lived organisation’, identifying areas for further development. It utilized sociometric analysis - or as Spillane would term, social networks – to identify the influencing relationships among staff between formal and informal leaders within the organisation. It sought out structures and processes - or as Spillane would term, tools and routines - developed and drawn from by the headteachers to progress a distributed perspective. It sought out both the lived and designed aspects of the organization, the formal and informal, and tried to understand their duality. And, it centrally located school leaders.

However, this study differed from those conducted by Spillane in a number of key
respects. It did not set out to observe leadership practice, which would have been dependent upon observer interpretation. Nor did it examine school records and documentation, formal accounts or scripts which Spillane and Coldren, (2011: 53) acknowledge, ‘tell us little about ‘how’ the work is accomplished’. The sociometric analysis in this study did not focus exclusively on classroom instruction as the core business of schools. Nor did it focus exclusively on the advice and support teachers sought and provided in relation to the instruction of literacy and numeracy. Had Spillane’s methods been adopted, insights gained would have been different. Key findings might also have been missed such as the insights gained in relation to the support staff role. That would have been a pity, particularly, as the role of support staff within a distributed perspective was not evident in the literature. Other aspects of leadership beyond that focused on instruction would not have been explored. And, most notably, the headteachers’ experiences and perceptions of a distributed perspective would not have been explored in any depth, nor would their intended purpose or tensions encountered have been investigated. As such, this study makes an original contribution to existing empirical knowledge.

12.3 Recommendations
The small scale of the study means any recommendations are offered with a degree of humility. However, given the limited empirical understandings of distributed leadership, they are made with the intention of provoking further debate and discussion. In that spirit, recommendations are made for policy makers, school leaders at all levels and for leadership development programmes.

12.3.1 Recommendations for Policy Makers
Although its theoretical underpinning is problematic, the endorsement of distributed leadership within the policy frame has not arisen by accident. Globalization with its interconnections between economies and links between the performance of education systems and economic prosperity led to the belief that market mechanisms stimulate educational improvements, leading to the drive behind new public management. What followed, was a move towards new forms of responsibility for quality and effectiveness, bringing with it the changing role of headteachers charged with taking forward national policy directives within a new managerialist perspective. Devolved governance led to multiple accountabilities and increased workload which combined with a perceived recruitment and retention headteacher
crisis, prompted the identification of leadership models enabling the redistribution of school work. Workforce reform, with changes to teachers contracts and education legislation, targeted the redistribution of workload enabling a refocus of the headteacher role, concentrating more on improving the quality of learning and teaching in a drive to secure efficient and effective management of schools. Leadership was positioned as different from and morally superior to management, enabling formal leaders to influence staff and engage them in school improvement.

In that regard, the promotion of the hero charismatic headteacher (Fullan, 2005; Gronn, 2002) proved ineffectual (Southworth, 2004). So too did the top-down change agenda. Formal role-based teacher leadership did not deliver the school effectiveness agenda (Smylie et al., 2002). In searching for a panacea, distributed leadership offered the antithesis to the model perceived as dysfunctional. A more distributed perspective (Storey, 2004) located teacher leadership within social learning systems and communities of practice, embedded within flatter collegial management structures.

The theoretical construction for distributed leadership was artificial, rather than based on empirical research. Little wonder ‘implementation gaps’ and ‘policy mess’ (Rhodes, 1997: 4) arose in relation to its political endorsement. Lack of cohesion or effective strategy within the Scottish policy network, resulted in divergent policy development, competing voices striving to influence policy direction (Paterson, 2003b). Despite political endorsement, distributed leadership was flawed from the outset, lacking conceptual understanding, a unified ideology and competing policy discourse. Little wonder suspicion surrounded the motivations behind distributed leadership, compounded by lingering bad feeling in relation to post McCrone (Scottish Executive, 2001) job sizing.

**Recommendation 1: The Development of An Informed Policy Discourse**

In order to move forward with new, empirically based understandings, policy makers need to find ways to overcome suspicions of distributed leadership as a new managerialist strategy to engage staff in a top-down change agenda. The policy discourse requires to be informed and carefully articulated, avoiding contradictory agendas.
**Recommendation 2: The Development of Clear Role Expectations**

The expectations of leadership practice of both formal and informal leaders need to be carefully articulated. The planned review of the Standards framework could provide the focus, reconceptualising, articulating and aligning the different teacher roles from pre-service to headship. However, care should be taken to ensure that a potential ceiling of activity and engagement is not created. The EIS (2010) policy statement represents a milestone. The largest professional body in Scotland has recognized the distinctiveness of leadership, separated it from the formal functions of management and in so doing, provided the opportunity for leadership to become an integral part of every teacher’s role. Leadership, as distinct from management, has and continues to be privileged (Gunter, 2004 and 2005; Gronn, 2003b) within contemporary policy discourse (Donaldson, 2010; McCormac, 2011) but there needs to be an articulate justification for such positioning, and clarity as to the locus of each role within a distributed perspective.

**12.3.2 Recommendations for School Leaders at All Levels**

In the absence of sound theory, clarity of concept or agreed definition, the headteachers involved in this study were engaged in ‘sense-making’ with their staff (Spillane and Caldren, 2011: 7). With all three case studies, there was a constant danger of contrived collegiality (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992; Hargreaves 1994). Each headteacher considered knowledge of individual staff members to be key to a distributed perspective. Each was skilled in using that knowledge to get the best from individual staff. There was at times a thin line between actively supporting the professional development of staff and manipulation.

**Recommendation 3: The Development of Appreciation for the Headteacher’s Role**

Despite their commitment to a distributed perspective in practice, each headteacher remained central to how distributed leadership operated, in terms of:

- Retaining overall power and influence
- Retaining strategic control over the direction of school improvement
- Providing legitimisation to staff leadership

Given the pivotal role of the headteacher within a distributed perspective, developing better understandings of that role are recommended. In relation to that,
better understandings of the number of contradictions that surfaced are also recommended.

Recommendation 4: The Development of Appreciation for Staff Roles

Given the complexities inherent in a distributed perspective, it would seem reasonable to suggest that school leaders at all levels need to engage in more overt discussion of their respective roles. And, given the lack of clarity within the literature and policy discourse, such discussion needs to be particular to the school context and to build from the more basic levels to include discussion of:

- What do we mean by leadership?
- Why do we consider leadership to be important?
- What types of leadership role are there?
- How do different leadership roles complement each other?
- Who should have a leadership role?
- When and where should those leadership roles operate?
- What expectations should (different) leaders have of colleagues?
- What expectations should colleagues have of (different) leaders?

In so doing, the all important component of trust within a developing conducive school culture might be safeguarded. With trust, all things become possible.

12.3.3 Recommendations for Leadership Development Programmes

It was outwith the scope of the study to explore the ancillary research question: What implications, if any, are there for leadership development with particular reference to the SQH programme? However, the importance of leadership preparation arose from a review of the literature and its impact surfaced at various points of the study. The three headteachers were driven by a belief that distributed forms of leadership have a positive impact on school practice. That belief was nurtured within the postgraduate leadership preparation programme they had experienced, premised upon the SfH that positively positions distributed leadership. The theoretical frame the case study headteachers had developed through engaging with the programme informed their understandings of effective school leadership and provided the impetus to challenge established orthodoxies. Their role and the approaches they were progressing were legitimized for them and for the headteachers they were working with. Where that headteacher had also
completed the programme, there was a shared understanding of the rationale behind the effort to push the boundaries of established practice. Where that headteacher had not completed the programme, such understanding was lacking and the headteacher concerned was required to take a leap of faith and trust that all would end well.

**Recommendation 5: The Development of Better Informed Problematisation in Leadership Preparation Programmes**

Leadership development programmes would do well to recognise the problematic nature of a distributed perspective on leadership and management. And, they would do well to intentionally problematise with leadership candidates their experience and understandings of a distributed perspective in practice. Furthermore, it might be helpful to the candidates and their headteacher supporters to communicate explicitly the intentions behind a distributed perspective, the implications of that perspective and the challenges as well as the opportunities it presents for school practice.

12.4 **Recommendations for Theoretical Development and Future Research**

The recommendations for theoretical development and future research stem in part, from the findings and discussion of the findings, and from the limitations of this study. As before, the study’s small-scale, means any recommendations are offered with a degree of humility. However, given the limited empirical research conducted into distributed leadership, it is hoped some insights are worthy of sharing. In that spirit, recommendations are made for theoretical development before discussing the significance of the results for future research, the methodological challenges, shortcomings in the research design and their implications for future research. The limitations of the study affecting the validity or transferable analytic generalisation of the findings are recognized.

12.4.1 **The Significance of the Results for Theoretical Development**

The main recommendations for theoretical development concur with those of Gronn and Gunter with respect to various confusions and their root causes within the distributed leadership theory. Those confusions surfaced at various points of the study, requiring continuous negotiation by headteachers, teachers and support staff. Identifying how they did so contributes to the limited empirically based theory available.
Recommendation 6: The Development of More Sophisticated Leadership Analysis

Currently, leadership is often conceptualized unhelpfully in terms of a division of labour between leader and follower, separating the design from the implementation of the work (Gronn, 2003a and 2003b). A more sophisticated understanding of how agency and structure work within practice is needed (Mahoney, and Snyder, 1999; Reed, 1997), along with the resulting influences on teacher engagement (Gunter, 2003). More specifically, a more sophisticated analysis is needed of how leadership is distributed, beyond simply the leader empowering the follower (Gronn, 2000; Gunter, 2003).

Recommendation 7: The Development of Theory Reflecting The Lived Reality

Since ‘how leadership is distributed and with what effect is relatively uncharted territory’ (Harris and Spillane, 2008: 32), more empirical studies are needed to illuminate the lived reality within schools. This study identified a range of conceptual confusions indicating that what may be called for is a return to first principles, establishing a theoretical basis underpinned by empirical understandings. In that regard, consensus for the following would be most useful:

- What do we mean by educational leadership?
- What do we mean by distributed leadership?
- Is the term, distributed leadership, the best way to describe the practices located in schools? Or, would other terms such as parallel leadership (Crowther et al., 2009; Durrant and Holden, 2006) or hybrid leadership (Gronn, 2009a and 2009b) more accurately reflect school leadership practices?

Three specific areas are suggested for theoretical development:

1. More empirically based theorizing is required in relation to the role of the headteacher within a distributed perspective. Although leadership could be described as a flow of influence not necessarily connected to headship (Gronn, 2000; 2008), in identifying the inescapable influence of the headteacher role within a distributed perspective, this study concurred with the findings of Murphy et al. (2009). By distributing accountability and leadership, the headteacher role becomes focused on influence through professional expertise and moral imperative rather than line management authority (Bell, 2007). However,
headteachers do still have line management responsibility resulting in potential tensions in boundary spanning (Harris, 2007).

2. More empirically based theorizing is required in relation to the role of other staff within a distributed perspective. Although leadership could be described as concerning those activities tied to the core work of the school as an organization (Spillane, 2006; Spillane and Diamond, 2007; Spillane and Caldron, 2011), this study identified that the focus for such activity differed depending on role and remit. Studies which focus solely on the perceptions of headteachers may not be helpful, if Reeves’ (2007: 94) view is accurate: ‘The greatest impediment to meaningful cultural change is the gap between what leaders say they value and what they actually do’. More constructive, would be studies like this one, gathering the views of staff to provide a lens with which headteachers can view the lived reality of staff and reflect on the implications.

3. More empirically based theorizing is required in relation to how staff engagement in a distributed perspective develops over time. This study identified that the roles of formal and informal leaders differed in their focus and function. Teachers focused on curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment; the headteacher additionally focused on ensuring the effective and efficient use of finite resources across school functions, mediating between internal and external forces, maintaining a strategic and long term overview. Formal leadership and management roles were charged with setting and progressing school improvement priorities within a headteacher leader and teacher follower paradigm (Crowther, 1997; Murphy, 2005b). Teacher leadership was at micro level; headteacher leadership was at macro level (Crowther et al., 2009). However, in the early years of establishing a distributed perspective, the headteachers in this study had more involvement at the micro level than would have been suggested within the literature. They appreciated that their influence was indirect and mediated through the exercise of teacher leadership (Harris and Muijs, 2003; Leithwood et al., 1996) and they appreciated that teacher leadership focused on learning and pedagogy (Harris and Muijs, 2003). However, in order to establish teacher leadership, they exemplified a ‘hands on’ approach. This may have relevance for theoretical development in relation to how staff engagement in a distributed perspective develops over time.
12.4.2 The Significance of the Results for Future Research

The main recommendations for future research relate to the conduct of other empirical studies to further explain, confirm or challenge the findings of this study.

Recommendation 8: The Development of Other Empirical Studies

Six specific studies are suggested:

1. This study focused on the experiences and perceptions of three primary headteachers in their early years of headship, believing distributed leadership to be integral to their leadership philosophy. As such, its findings are limited. Future studies could explore the experiences and perceptions of a larger number of headteachers, headteachers of other sectors, headteachers with a different leadership philosophy and headteachers at different points in their career.

2. Although the views of staff were gathered through the 360° analysis to elicit the lived rather than the designed experience of school leadership, the focus was very much on the headteachers. Future studies could explore at greater depth the experiences and perceptions of teaching and support staff. In particular, teachers’ perceptions of their role in relation to the leadership role of support staff would seem worthy of exploration, both with regard to benefits and tensions encountered when support staff play a leadership role, and with regard to their own role in developing the leadership capacity of support staff.

3. Also worthy of further study is the inter-dependent relationship between headteacher and teacher leader within a distributed perspective. In order for leadership to be distributed, staff need to assume leadership roles. However, this study found that not all teachers wish a leadership role, have the personal abilities or skill set to enable them to lead, or are perceived by colleagues as being either effective practitioners or competent with supporting adults. If, as the literature and the findings from this study would suggest, headteachers play a pivotal role in encouraging and enabling teacher leadership, case studies to explore that role could contribute to theory building in this area.
4. This study formed a snapshot of a point in each headteacher’s and each school’s history. A longitudinal study could follow the development of a distributed perspective from a headteacher’s appointment, through their time in office and beyond. In so doing, deeper understanding of the headteacher’s role within a distributed perspective could be garnered. And, the potential effect for staff in schools of the appointment of a new headteacher could be further explored through key transition points.

5. A longitudinal study would also be better placed to ascertain any impact of a distributed perspective on school outcomes, a contested area but one worthy of exploration. The framing of such a study would need careful consideration.

6. With a growing interest in developing a closer relationship between research and practice, universities and schools (Donaldson, 2010), there would seem to be potential in developing a study to gauge the usefulness of the research methods and approaches in supporting school leaders with developing their practice through diagnosis and design (Spillane and Coldren, 2011). The headteachers in this study were purposefully progressing towards an understanding of what distributed leadership should look like in practice. As a continuation of that process, they drew from the data to understand their school further, identifying next steps for future development. The ‘external view’ of the researcher appeared central in assisting each headteacher to reflect critically and objectively on their own and on school practice. Each headteacher identified unsolicited areas for further improvement and each voiced that they had found participation in the study constructive. The study conducted by Murphy et al. (2009) provides a potential model for such co-construction.

12.4.3 Methodological challenges
The small-scale and limitations of the methods used in this study are acknowledged. In the current policy climate, with calls for universities and schools to work more closely together in order to facilitate high quality professional development for teachers (Donaldson, 2010), there is merit in the approaches taken in this study to develop understandings of the school as a lived organization. By working with headteachers and school staff to support their diagnosis and design work (Spillane and Caldon, 2011: 20; 17; 19; 105) the data collected could provide a lens,
supporting an ‘outsider stance’ for ‘savvy leaders’ committed to ‘reflection-in-practice’, since:

Diagnosis and design, like most work, require tools. Chief among these tools are the conceptual ones that we bring to the work of diagnosis and design.

In so doing, research agendas such as knowledge transfer and impact could also be progressed. However, a number of methodological challenges would need to be acknowledged and addressed. Moreover, the confidential nature of the data needs to be handled with sensitivity, guarding against any negative impact on school staff.

Shortcomings in the Research Design and Implications for Future Research
There were strengths to the design of this study, enabling a depth of understanding to be reached, arguably not possible using different approaches. However, no direct observation of leadership and management practice was undertaken. Equally, no interviewing of teachers or support staff took place. The headteacher was instead used in a semi-ethnographic sense to interpret key findings and make sense of their implications. Some would argue that this approach precluded the gathering of in-depth understandings of the experiences and perspectives of teaching and support staff. However, that would have been a different study.

In the design of the research methodology, the complexity of an emergent, semi-grounded approach was not fully appreciated, nor was the time required for the innumerable iterative processes. The research questions went through around nine incarnations before settling on those reported in the thesis. In retrospect, a different set of questions might have led to more interesting findings. The original intention to pilot the methods, revise their construction and then conduct the study proper was ill conceived. Having gathered the depth of insights from the first case study, they merited full inclusion in the findings and analysis. One could argue that this indicated the methods were sound and had more than a tweaking of approach and minor reordering of the 360° analysis questions been required, a different approach would have been merited.

On a more rudimentary level, the headteacher diary although suggested by the first headteacher, was not wholly successful as a data gathering method. An alternative approach might have worked better but the experience sampling method advocated by Spillane and Coldren (2011) would still not have been appropriate. The framing
of the wording of some 360° questionnaire items meant that it was not possible to identify whether, for example, staff lacked a level of confidence in being supported by SMT or colleagues or both, when they used their initiative to intervene, even when the outcome proved problematic.

**Limitations of the Study Affecting the Validity or Generalisability of the Findings**

As discussed in detail within the methodology chapter, this study comprised small-scale empirical research using interpretative enquiry with aspects of a grounded approach to reach a depth of understanding, with a focus on three headteacher case studies. As such, a subjectivist rather than an objectivist approach was adopted. The focus for the research conducted was on the experiences and perceptions of primary headteacher SQH graduates in their early years of headship, articulating a commitment to taking forward a distributed perspective on leadership and management.

The sample was carefully constructed (Cohen *et al.*, 2006) using purposive with elements of convenience sampling (Burton *et al.*, 2008; Goodson and Sikes, 2001). Consistent with a life history approach, headteacher selection was based on respondents having the knowledge and experience of the research topic, enabling them to talk for extended periods of time, rather than seeking generalisability (Goodson and Sikes, 2001). Cases were included on the basis of their typicality, each case selected as illustrative of features or processes in which the study was interested (Silverman, 2005). The sample did not claim to represent the wider population. Three different types of primary school were selected within the same local authority: large urban; very small rural; medium sized semi-rural with a nursery and a specialist provision class. Each was non-denominational and each had a below average (FME 16.9%) deprivation indicator.

The sample size was relatively small. However, given the ethnographic and qualitative nature of the research, that was appropriate (Cohen *et al.*, 2006; Goodson and Sikes, 2001). The sample size was not determined at the beginning of the study, becoming clear once repetition of themes emerged and adequacy (Goodson and Sikes, 2001: 23) was established. Each case was studied for intrinsic interest. The findings offer transferable analytic generalisation, generalising findings to a broader theory, tested by replication (Riessman, 2008; Yin, 2009), involving

As a form of case-centred inquiry (Riessman, 2008: 195), the narrative components emphasised ‘trustworthiness’, offering a pragmatic alternative to generalisability. Transparency was key in terms of making methodological decisions clear, describing the production of interpretations and making available the primary data. A large quantity of case study data was collected (Bassey, 1999: 65) to enable the exploration of significant features, create plausible interpretations, test for the trustworthiness of interpretations, construct an argument or story related to relevant research conveyed convincingly and ‘to provide an audit trail by which other researchers may validate or challenge the findings, or construct alternative arguments’. In adopting a life story approach, personal truth was acknowledged from the subjective point of view (Atkinson, 1998; Riessman, 2008) where internal consistency and coherence became important quality checks, in that the stories constructed were plausible and consistent. Validation rather than validity was felt important (Mishler, 1990). Instead of ‘reliability’ and ‘internal/external validity’, attention was paid to ‘the stability, trustworthiness, and scope’ of the findings (Elliott, 2005: 22-25).

12.5 Final Summary and Conclusion

Contemporary policy discourse relating to distributed leadership in Scottish schools is not based upon evidence-based practice gathered from research conducted in Scotland. It is based on policy from other countries perceived to be similar to Scotland without recognition of key social context or workforce reform differences. Since few empirical studies have been conducted into the practice of distributed leadership and its effects, such policy could at best be described as aspirational, having normative potential, at worst prescriptive and politically driven. Such policy has been advanced by key players in the policy network with a vested interest to promote collegiality for workforce reform within flatter school management structures, taking forward the school improvement agenda as efficiently as possible, addressing the perceived headteacher recruitment and retention crisis.

It is hoped that this study contributes to a conversation about what distributed leadership might be and how it is currently operationalised in schools. Further
discussion is merited as to whether ‘distributed’ is the best word to describe the lived reality of school leadership. Perhaps it is time to consider whether distributed leadership equates to ‘designer leadership’ (Gronn, 2003b: 284) since it represents little more than a desirable construct rather than a robust field in itself. If it is to survive and thrive, then it will need to stand up to scrutiny. Without such discussion “‘distributed leadership” is in danger of becoming no more than a slogan’ (Leithwood et al., 2004: 7).

On the other hand, if as this study would suggest, the headteacher’s role is so crucial to a distributed perspective, perhaps ‘distributed leadership’ is an oxymoron, an expression with contradictory words. Perhaps it is time to look for adverbs that better describe leadership processes and practices. A return to debate what educational leadership is, along with its purpose, would seem sagacious. From there, a shared language could provide the medium with which to move forward. If leadership is defined as ‘a relationship of social influence’ (Spillane and Coldren, 2011: 76), then what follows is a discussion of whose influence and for what purpose? If leadership is perceived as ‘a fluid practice that changes with the situation’ (Spillane and Coldren, 2011: 32), then many things become possible. Perhaps, rather than distributed leadership, hybrid leadership (Gronn, 2009b: 17; 20; 35; 36) might provide a more accurate term, with its ‘mixed leadership patterns’ reflecting the ‘constantly shifting leadership mix or configuration’ within the ‘division of labour that operates in schools … represent[ing] an attempt by schools to accommodate contingency’ and respond to the organisation’s ‘need for intelligence’. Or, perhaps rather than distributed leadership, parallel leadership (Crowther, 2009: 53) would be a more accurate description, conceptualizing a ‘process whereby teacher leaders and their principals engage in collective action to build school capacity’.

Hierarchy is perhaps an inevitable consequence of the formal staffing structures within Scottish schools rather than the intended consequence of the headteacher’s leadership style. However, a distributed perspective located within an established hierarchy may well explain the tensions encountered. A hybrid or parallel perspective on leadership might more accurately depict the distinct and complementary nature of and focus for formal and informal leadership roles. Perhaps it is time to reconceptualise the role of the headteacher and the purpose of educational leadership focused on direction setting, human development and organizational
development. Without such reconceptualisation, headteachers seem trapped in a catch 22.

Such reconceptualisation will require a degree of good faith on the part of all involved. The EIS (2010), the largest professional body in Scotland has moved significantly in its public endorsement of the leadership role to potentially be played by all teachers. In order to build on that good faith, it will be important to ensure the focus is fixed on educational rather than performance leadership. Political processes charged with workforce reform will need to be ethically informed. Within a climate of good faith, the majority of staff within the three case studies’ schools were actively engaged to different degrees in leadership processes. Teacher leadership was found, located both in ‘helping teacher colleagues and facilitating school improvement’ (Murphy, 2005b: 77). So too was support staff leadership, although this was less well understood or secure. The headteachers remained central to the different leadership processes, constantly negotiating the way forward.

Despite the challenges, each of the three case study headteachers was articulate, highly reflective on their practice and committed to making sense of a distributed perspective on leadership and management. Their motivation was to positively impact on the quality of educational experience for pupils. To ensure that impact, they regarded staff to be the most valuable resource and expended considerable effort to support the professional development of staff. It seems fitting therefore, to end with their words. The third case study headteacher raised an inherent contradiction and questioned within a truly distributed perspective whether the headteacher role would become obsolete:

And I don’t know, maybe the ultimate sort of distributed leadership model, I don’t know if the headteacher would necessarily be sitting here. Do you know what I mean? ... And I think while the head’s sitting here, ‘the head’, ‘the management’, I think we’ll get pretty much what we’ve always got, you know. And I think it will be some kind of major structural change to the whole system that’s going to create a distributed leadership role and, you know... I think that something big like that has to happen before you’ll see much of a, a change.

If the headteacher role is to remain, then that role needs to be re-examined in relation to the leadership roles of others within the school organization. Otherwise, it seems likely that distributed leadership will remain ‘in the gift of the headteacher’. This is an opportune time for critical reflection. It is hoped that the recommendations
made will contribute to discussion around policy development, school leadership practice and leadership preparation, as well as to theoretical development and future research.