

School of Education

**An Examination of Middle Leadership Positions in Western
Australian Secondary Schools**

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DECLARATION

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the complexities inherent within secondary school middle leadership positions. These formal positions typically have line management accountability for the supervision of teaching and/or ancillary staff, through the Deputy Principal to the Principal. The study investigated the formal position requirements, as well as the professional perceptions and expectations of Western Australian, secondary school middle leaders. A mixed methods research design was used with a qualitative phase followed by a quantitative phase of data collection and analysis. The qualitative phase involved two stages of data collection and analyses. Firstly, a document analysis was conducted on the formal position descriptions of middle leadership positions in a purposive sample of ten Western Australian secondary schools. The formal position descriptions detailing the professional responsibilities of middle leaders were collected and analysed using content analysis techniques. Additionally, nine semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of subject, pastoral and program-based middle leaders across three Western Australian secondary schools. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with a senior leader of each school sampled. The quantitative phase involved the construction and administration of an instrument designed to measure middle leaders' perceptions of their role. The survey data were subsequently statistically analysed using the Rasch measurement model.

The results of interviews with middle and senior leaders revealed six key aspects of the middle leadership position including: the dual and dynamic nature of middle leadership; the organisational functions of middle leaders; the problems and limitations associated with middle leadership positions; the effective qualities of middle leaders and their professional needs; the support and review requirements of the position, as well as the aspirations and role satisfaction of middle leaders. The results of the quantitative survey reveal middle leaders attitudes relating to five key facets of their position, including: role clarity; role authority; role support; role value and role fulfilment. The combined results of the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study resulted in the identification of seven key areas for the growth and development of middle leadership position in secondary schools. These include: the

development of clear expectations and a school-wide understanding of the position; a focus on strengthening the influence of middle leaders on whole-school development; the provision of opportunities for leadership and management development; the need for peer support initiatives; the need for consistent performance appraisal and feedback processes; a focus on collaboration between middle and senior level school leaders; and the promotion of the position within the school and educational community.

The implications of this study for schools include the need for clear role definition for middle leaders and targeted professional development opportunities, with a focus on leadership development. A significant outcome of this research is the construction of an instrument which measures middle leaders' role perceptions. The instrument could be used by schools as a means of identifying the needs of middle leaders within a specific context and could also be usefully applied to future research into middle leadership. The work of middle leaders is vital in secondary schools and this research provides insight into the many dimensions of the role.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the research, beginning with a definition of middle leadership for the purposes of this study. An explanation of where middle leadership fits within the secondary school organisational structure and an introduction to some of the issues relating to educational middle leadership is provided. The research objectives for the study are outlined, including the five core research questions. Additionally, the significance of the research project, as well as the limitations of the study are discussed. The chapter ends with an overview of the structural organisation of this thesis.

Background

This study is an examination of middle leadership positions in Western Australian secondary schools. For the purpose of the study, middle leaders are defined as educators who lead a department or program area within a school and, in addition to their work as a program leader, typically have a significant teaching role. Middle leaders are usually accountable for the operation of their program area to the school's Principal, through a Deputy Principal or similar member of the school's senior leadership team. A core duty of middle leaders is to oversee and support the work of the staff in their area of responsibility. As well as their significant teaching load, middle leaders will also hold the responsibility of leading the teachers and staff within their program area. Thus, middle leaders work between the teaching staff and the senior leaders of the school (that is the Principal, Deputy Principal or equivalent positions). The middle leadership level exists in primary, middle and secondary schools, yet for the purpose of this study only secondary school middle leadership

roles have been examined. Gunter and Fitzgerald (2007) explain that middle leadership refers to:

... the division of labour where some adults are placed in the hierarchy between teachers and senior managers. Typically, these are adults who are 'heads of' such as a curriculum area, faculty, a year group, a house, a key stage, or might be given a title such as Co-ordinator, Dean or Director. (p. 2)

In this study, middle leadership positions are differentiated into three categories based on the nature of their program area: subject leaders, such as Heads of Department or Learning Area Coordinators; pastoral leaders, such as Student Service Coordinators or Heads of House; and specialist program leaders, such as a Director of Music or Learning Support Coordinator.

The function and nature of middle leadership positions within secondary schools has gained the attention of educators and educational researchers, as awareness of the influence and importance of these positions in the school organisation continues to develop. Middle leaders are seen to be vital to the day-to-day operation of schools, yet there is an interest in their potential influence on whole-school development and on the management of organisational change. Furthermore, the central position middle leaders hold within the school structure can present them with unique challenges and opportunities in their work. Middle leaders work within many contexts in the school environment (Busher, 2005), as a classroom teacher, a program leader, in collaboration with the senior leaders of the school and as a school representative in the wider professional community. It is clear that middle leaders hold a unique position within schools and can potentially have a very positive and potent impact on the process of school leadership. However, much of the research relating to educational leadership has focused on the role of senior leaders within schools, in particular school principals. Additionally, a lot of the literature about middle leadership positions has focused on one particular type of middle leadership position, most commonly the middle leaders who are in charge of a subject department or learning area. This study aims to draw upon and build on the current literature relating to middle leadership, by exploring the experiences and perspectives of different types of middle leaders within secondary schools. The study examines the functions of middle leadership within the school organisation, as well

as the perceptions middle leaders hold about the nature, influence, value and support of their work.

This study examines: the organisation functions of middle leaders; the significance and influence of middle leaders within the school organisation; the professional support needs of middle leaders; the career aspirations and expectations of middle leaders; the difficulties and limitations of the position; and the role perceptions of middle leaders. This thesis presents the findings of a mixed methods research project, which aimed to explore the complex nature of middle leadership positions, using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The qualitative phase involved a document analysis of middle leadership position descriptions and semi-structured interviews with middle leaders and senior leaders within the schools sampled. The qualitative phase of data collection and analysis focused on identifying the roles and responsibilities of middle leaders, as well as a developing a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the work of middle leaders. A quantitative survey was designed to build upon the qualitative findings. The quantitative phase of the study involved the measurement of middle leaders' role perceptions, through the development of a survey instrument and a subsequent analysis of the survey data using the Rasch measurement model. The quantitative results offer a measure of the role perceptions of middle leaders in the areas of role clarity, role authority, role support, role value and role fulfilment. Overall, the study aims to provide a clearer understanding of middle leadership positions and the issues impacting their work in secondary schools.

Research objectives

The core objective of this research was to examine the function and features of middle leadership positions in Western Australian secondary schools. A central focus was examining the experiences and perspectives of middle leaders, aiming to identify possible ways in which the middle leadership position could be better supported and developed in schools. This study was structured around five central research questions, outlined below:

1. How is the middle leadership role explained in school documents?

2. How do senior leaders and middle leaders explain the middle leadership role?
3. What does a middle leader self-report measure reveal about middle leaders' perception of their role?
4. What are the attributes of middle leadership and the influences on their framing and realisation?
5. How can middle leadership be developed?

Significance of the study

This study is important in that it aims to provide insight into the complexities of middle leadership positions, including the skills, experiences and perceptions of secondary school middle leaders. This may have significance for new and experienced middle leaders, or teachers considering taking on a middle leadership position and who seek a deeper understanding of the role. This study is potentially important for secondary schools in reviewing the organisational structures and the responsibilities of middle leaders. In particular, the research may assist school leaders in examining ways to support and develop middle leadership positions within their school. The research findings may also be of significance in the development of professional learning or instructional programs for middle leaders. The development of a quantitative survey designed to measure the role perceptions of middle leaders is significant, in that it contributes to the development of constructs and instruments that can be used to better understand the role of school leaders. More broadly, the study is important in that it aims to raise awareness and understanding of the need to promote, support and develop the work of middle leaders in the broader educational community.

Limitations of the study

The limitations of this study are largely due to a restricted sample size. Although all efforts were made to obtain a representative sample, the research data from which these observations are drawn were gathered from a limited sample of middle leaders

in Western Australian secondary schools. Any generalisations formed from such results are made with an awareness of validity concerns. The sample of schools for both the qualitative and quantitative phases was predominantly secondary schools within the metropolitan region and thus, the research sample is not representative of regional or remote schools. In the qualitative phase, interviews were undertaken with a small sample drawn from three schools with a total of nine middle leaders and three senior leaders interviewed. Thus, whilst the interviews provided rich qualitative data, the limited sample of interview subjects needs to be taken into account when forming generalisations from the data. Similarly, the survey data were drawn from the responses of 125 middle leaders (approximately a 40% return rate) and thus the quantitative findings are also based on a smaller-scale sample.

Organisation of the thesis

The thesis begins with a review of the current and pertinent literature. Relevant theories about educational leadership are explored and, more specifically, the literature relating to middle leadership positions is examined with a focus on presenting the core issues and ideas about middle leadership that inform this study. A description of the research methods follows in Chapter Three, with an explanation of the mixed methods research design used in this study. The qualitative and quantitative phases of the study are explained in detail, including the processes of sampling, data collection and data analysis. Issues relating to reliability, validity and ethics are also addressed in this chapter. The research results are presented in three chapters, which follow the discussion of research methods. Firstly, the results from the qualitative document analysis are presented in Chapter Four, offering a framework outlining the core functions of middle leaders. Following this, the results from the semi-structured interviews are presented in Chapter Five. Here, seven key areas are examined: the nature of the middle leadership role; the problems and limitations associated with middle leadership; the organisational function of middle leaders; the skills and qualities of effective middle leaders; the professional development needs of middle leaders; issues relating to the support and review of middle leadership positions; and the personal goals and experiences of middle leaders. Chapter Six presents the results from the quantitative survey. This chapter

includes an explanation of the survey instrument, as well as the five sub-constructs underpinning the survey design. These sub-constructs or facets include: role clarity, role authority, role support, role value and role fulfilment. An explanation of the Rasch measurement model is presented, as well as a detailed analysis of the data-to-model fit statistics. A discussion of results is presented in Chapter Seven, in which the results from both the qualitative and quantitative phases are analysed and interpreted to present a discussion of the research findings. Links between the research findings and the current literature on middle leadership are also identified and considered. The research questions provide the framework for the discussion of results. The thesis concludes with an outline of the implications of this study for schools and for future research.

Summary

This chapter has outlined the research design and objectives of this study, including an overview of the research questions, as well as the significance and limitations of the study. The research project addresses a broad range of issues relating to middle leadership positions, including the role and organisational functions of middle leaders, their professional support needs, the professional skills and qualities of effective middle leaders, and their professional experiences, expectations and perceptions. The next chapter presents a review of the literature relating to middle leadership positions.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overview

This review of literature is divided into two sections: firstly, a background to educational leadership is provided, followed by a specific focus on educational middle leadership. The first section provides a brief overview of the broad field of educational leadership. It includes an examination of collaborative theories of leadership, which constitute a shift away from formal, hierarchical views of educational leadership. The connection between collaborative leadership and whole-school improvement is also examined. The second section focuses more specifically on middle leaders, examining in detail the role and influence of this important educational leadership position. It explores: various definitions of the role; the responsibilities of middle leaders; the significance and utilisation of middle leadership positions in schools; the tensions inherent within the role; and the training needs of these school leaders. The chapter concludes with a summary of the issues and concepts raised.

Educational leaders and leadership

Educational leadership has been defined in many ways. Every definition places different emphasis on the qualities, skills, values or understandings a teacher needs to be effective in the critical position of educational leader. Barth (1988, p. 131) for example, emphasises the need for educational leaders to have a personal vision: "Leadership is making happen what you believe in". Wallace (1996, p. 20) on the other hand, explains that an educational leader is a person "...who conceives of his or her role as concerned primarily with educational processes or outcomes". Additionally, the leader needs to be well-informed of current educational theories and practices, and committed to lifelong learning (Wallace, 1996). Fullan (2001) stresses

the skill of problem solving in leaders, who provide solutions to difficult problems. Lambert (1998) points out the important distinction between a leader and leadership; whereas leaders are quite often defined according to a list of traits, leadership is more complex. A skilled leader alone does not necessarily make for successful leadership: "...‘leadership’ is broader than the sum total of its ‘leaders,’ for it also involves an energy flow or synergy generated by those who choose to lead" (Lambert, 1998, p. 5). Likewise, Harris (2003a) stated that leadership is complex and multi-dimensional, as it involves more than simply leading; it also includes recognising and drawing out the potential of the members of the school community. These varying definitions provide an insight into the multi-faceted nature of educational leadership positions, and the many skills and qualities educational leaders are expected to have in carrying out their day-to-day leadership role.

Collaborative leadership

Traditionally, the role of educational leader has been thought of as synonymous with that of the school principal. This one person has been regarded as the primary focus of all leadership activities within the school and the site of power and authority. This view of educational leadership has prevailed in school organisations, largely due to the typically hierarchical nature of school structures (Gronn, 2003). Gronn (2003, p. 275) explains that "a hierarchy is a device for arranging levels or grades of authority from a minimum, at the base, to a maximum or superordinate level, at the top". Organisations have tended to favour a hierarchical structure because it acknowledges the existence of varying levels of competency, and accounts for the disproportionate amounts of work and value of work carried out within an organisation (Gronn, 2003). Hallinger (2003) explains that two prominent ways of conceptualising school leadership have emerged - the instructional and transformational leadership models. The instructional model focuses on a top-down leadership approach, in which the principal plays a central and direct coordinating role, with a strong focus on curriculum and instruction. In more recent years, the transformational leadership model has gained favour in a reaction against more controlled, hierarchical approaches to leadership. Transformational leadership emphasises notions of shared leadership, with the empowerment of teachers and the development of leadership

capacity across a school (Hallinger, 2003). The shared model of leadership has certainly gained support in the educational community, in recognition that "...in any organisation there is rarely ever just one leader and a number of followers" (Gronn, 2003, p. 278). Hargreaves and Fink (2008, p. 230) conceptualise leadership within schools as being a part of a "living system". They explain that schools can be thought of as "...self-organizing networks of communication". Leaders working within this communication web are able to influence and are influenced by the people and the environment around them. As the focus of this study is on middle leadership positions, in this model, middle leaders are viewed as a central part of the leadership network within school communities because of the important role they play in providing professional support and communication.

In transformational models, educational leadership is not limited to a small number of formal, recognised positions. Rather, a broader view is taken of the teachers' part in leadership activities, allowing for greater commitment and ownership of school goals by teachers (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Much of the literature about educational leadership sees it as a collective and collaborative process, and highlight the need for leadership capacity building within schools (Johnson, 1996). Lambert (2003) explains that schools are made up of many layers of leadership, including student, teacher and parent leaders. Each of these groups needs to be empowered to develop their leadership capacity. Many researchers view a dispersed leadership structure as an essential quality of effective schools (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001; Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson & Hann, 2002). Deal and Peterson (1999, p. xiii), for example, argue that the dispersal of leadership roles across many levels in schools correlates with school effectiveness: "...successful schools have leadership emanating from many people - leadership that maintains and supports learning for all students, as well as learning for staff". The connection between collaborative leadership models and school improvement is explored in more detail later in this chapter. Johnson (1996, p. 7) remarks that effective educational leaders are now less concerned about being seen to make good decisions and to deliver useful instructions; rather "they must persuade teachers, administrators, parents, and community leaders to join them in improving schools". Harris (2003a) reports that recent studies have indicated that educational leaders need to delegate *real responsibility* to many individuals in order to encourage whole school improvement.

This paradigm shift in the concept of leadership from hierarchical to collaborative brings a new awareness of the significance of middle leadership positions in the collaborative model.

Middle leaders function within the collaborative model of school leadership, with authority formally delegated to them by a school's principal and senior leaders. It is important, therefore, to examine more closely some of the literature about shared leadership theories. The next section examines three leadership concepts which are prevalent in current literature related to transformational leadership in schools; these include distributed leadership, teacher leadership and parallel leadership. While each of these terms represent distinct theories and ideas about leadership, they also overlap, as they each suggest that leadership roles should not be the sole domain of those at the top of traditional organisational hierarchies.

Distributed leadership

The concept of distributed leadership features in much of the recent literature about leadership structures in schools. Distributed leadership has been defined as occurring when "...leadership is distributed in a dynamic web of people, interactions and situations" (Turner, 2003, pp. 213-214), or more simply, as the decentralisation of leadership (Harris, 2003b). Harris (2008, p. 173) claims that the term 'distributed leadership' is often used in a misleading manner to cover all forms of shared or collaborative leadership, and that "distributed leadership theory would recognise that many people will have the potential to exercise leadership in any organisation but the key to success will be the way that leadership is facilitated, orchestrated and supported". Further, Harris (2008) states:

The distributed leadership model emphasises the active cultivation and development of leadership abilities within all members of a team. The core assumption is that each member has some leadership abilities that will be needed by the group at some time (p. 174).

Advocates of distributed leadership suggest that school leadership should not be thought of as existing exclusively in formal positions; rather, all people within the

school organisation have the potential to function as a leader (Turner 2003). Storey (2004) states that:

...the fundamental premise advanced by proponents of the concept of distributed leadership is that leadership activities should not be accreted into the hands of a sole individual but, on the contrary, they should be shared between a number of people in an organization or team (p. 252).

Fink (2011) warns that distributed leadership must mean more than simply the formal delegation of leadership responsibilities. Rather than being viewed as solely a structural feature of the school organisation, distributed leadership needs to be integrated into the school culture. According to Fink (2011):

Cultural distribution occurs when formal and emergent leadership blend seamlessly to contribute to a school as a professional learning community. Leadership certainly flows through the designated formal roles and structures, though many of these are explicitly innovative and improvement-oriented. But if a professional learning community works well, leadership is stretched across the school in ways that are creative, spontaneous and emergent... (p. 680).

Likewise, Helterbran (2010) argues that distributed leadership should not be seen as simply the delegation of leadership duties or the provision of assistance to school leaders by teachers. Helterbran (2010, p. 364) states, "effective leadership can and should be infused among teachers". Harris (2009, p. 3) suggests that distributed leadership can encompass formal leadership positions, such as senior and middle leaders, as well as informal positions: "In this model, formal leaders prompt emergent and creative actions among groups to whom leadership is distributed and those in formal leadership roles emphasise the management of interdependencies, rather than controls over process or outcomes".

Specifically, in considering the role of middle leaders, Dinham (2007) suggests that heads of department function to promote and develop the leadership capacity of teachers working in their department. Dinham (2007, p. 77) states that "a key aspect of the [heads of department] was how they were actively encouraging the leadership capacity of others, thus facilitating distributed leadership and leadership

sustainability in their departments”. However, despite the potential for middle leaders to play a key role in distributed leadership, they may in fact be too busy to build collaborative processes and leadership capacity amongst staff in their department (Feeney, 2009). In Feeney’s (2009) study of department leaders, middle leaders were more likely to perceive their leadership role in terms of their formal tasks and responsibilities rather than as being a process undertaken collaboratively with others. Feeney (2009) argues that the development of teacher leadership needs to become a central focus and responsibility of department leaders. The role middle leaders can play in promoting distributed leadership is relevant to the potential influence of middle leadership positions, which is explored later in this chapter.

Teacher leadership

Teacher leadership is a frequently used term in educational literature, yet it is often ambiguously or conflictingly defined, indicating uncertainty about its meaning (Harris, 2003b). Teacher leadership is thought to refer to “...the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement” (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, pp. 287-288). Likewise, Harris (2003b, p. 316) describes teacher leadership as referring to “...the exercise of leadership by teachers, regardless of position or designation... Teacher leadership is centrally concerned with forms of empowerment and agency which are also at the core of distributed leadership theory”. Teacher leadership can be thought of as a broad term which encompasses a range of leadership efforts across all levels of educational organisations. Like distributed leadership, teacher leadership is said to promote empowerment and shared responsibility, whereby “...a larger number of members of the organisation have a stake in the success of the school and all teachers are potential leaders” (Harris, 2003b, p. 318). Lambert (2003) suggests that traditional notions of the hierarchical structure of leadership limit the strength of teacher leadership within schools. She suggests that schools need to question these assumptions about leadership and work to promote opportunities for all teachers to learn and develop leadership capacity. Lambert (2003) insists that:

...all teachers have the right, capability and responsibility to be leaders, therefore, the major challenge before us is not to identify who is and who is not a teacher leader but to create a context that evokes leadership from all teachers (p. 422).

In relation to middle leadership, the question is whether teachers holding formal leadership positions such as head of department are considered as teacher leaders (York-Barr & Duke, 2004), or whether the term is limited to informal or additional leadership responsibilities undertaken by class teachers, such as mentoring or action research. Looking specifically at the position of middle leadership, Busher (2005) considers the extent to which middle leaders can be deemed teacher leaders or whether the term should be restricted to teachers in non-promoted positions. Busher (2005) explains that on balance, if much of a middle leader's work is classroom-based and they work collaboratively with teaching staff, they are, in effect, teacher leaders.

Parallel leadership

Parallel leadership is consistent with the concept of distributed leadership, and has its foundation in the belief that teacher leadership functions are of high value and importance. It emphasises the interaction between teacher leaders and those who hold traditional senior leadership positions (Andrews & Crowther, 2002). Andrews and Crowther (2002, p. 155) define parallel leadership as "...a process whereby teacher leaders and their principals engage in collective action to build capacity. It embodies mutual respect, shared purpose and allowance for individual expression". As the name suggests, the focus of parallel leadership is on balance and alignment within leadership structures and processes (Crowther, Ferguson & Hann, 2009). Crowther et al. (2009) explain that a key feature of effective shared leadership is the work of skilful individuals who strive to build a collaborative effort rather than trying to achieve consensus. 'Parallel leadership' is a specific concept and not just another term for 'distributed leadership': "It manifests definitive leadership functions for both principals and teacher leaders. It also embodies a specific set of values that connect teacher leaders and principals in accountable and synergistic relationships" (Crowther et al., 2009, p. 67).

Collaborative leadership and whole-school improvement

The influence of leaders is a major area of interest to researchers in both organisational and educational literature. The role of leaders in guiding and shaping schools has received a lot of attention, as there are connections between leadership and school effectiveness (see Sergiovanni, 1984; Sergiovanni, 2000; Harris, 2003a). Research and practice has indicated that there is a link between educational leadership and sustainable whole-school improvement. Harris (2003a, p. 73) explains: “There has been a consistent view emerging from the research base on effective schools that professional leadership is an important factor”. The importance of educational leadership lies in its potential to improve school effectiveness, learning and development. Hargreaves and Fink (2003) state that the main task of school leaders is to sustain learning and to make learning the central and primary focus of leadership, and Fullan (2001, p. 13), on the other hand, considers that an important outcome of educational leadership is “...to make a difference in the lives of students”.

Given that the leadership of a school is a significant factor in influencing school improvement, can collaborative models of leadership offer stronger or more beneficial outcomes than top-down leadership structures? It is thought that the existence of multiple leaders with a school organisation has several benefits. York-Barr and Duke (2004) consider that schools are logistically too large and complex to be led by a principal alone; instead, leadership responsibilities need to be delegated in order for schools to be run effectively. They argue that a benefit of dispersed leadership is that increased employee participation in leadership may result in more effective decision-making, as the decisions made are more likely to take into account the needs and opinions of various stakeholders. Furthermore, multiple leaders within schools may result in more widespread acceptance and ownership of organisational goals and a greater sense of empowerment by those involved (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Penlington, Kington and Day (2008) draw upon their qualitative study which examined the effect of leadership features on student outcomes. Their findings show that schools which adopt a distributed leadership model report improved staff involvement in school change. Penlington et al. (2008, p. 79) also highlight the importance of building the teaching and leadership capacity of teacher leaders, explaining that “developing the skills and knowledge of emerging leaders was

considered to be important because developing this capacity involved more people in making decisions about the direction of the school...”.

Harris (2008) examines the relationship between distributed leadership and organisational outcomes. The findings reveal that there is increasing evidence that a distributed leadership model can lead to improved potential for organisational change and development. Harris (2008) notes that certain patterns of leadership distribution offer greater potential than others and that educators should be wary of thinking that distributed leadership is always positive and meaningful for all organisations. Distributed leadership is proposed to be one potential factor that can promote positive change and outcomes in organisations (Harris, 2008). In a longitudinal study examining the influence of collaborative leadership on school improvement, Hallinger and Heck (2010) argue that school leadership in a distributed model can have a direct effect on a school’s achievement capacity. However, like Harris (2008), Hallinger and Heck (2010) suggest that leadership should be seen as one of several influencing factors. They explain that additional factors, including a school’s culture and resources, can also work to limit or strengthen a school’s improvement capacity. Hallinger and Heck (2010, p. 107) comment that “...leadership, while a potentially important drive for change, is by itself insufficient to bring about improvement in learning outcomes”. Similarly, in a discussion of teacher leadership, Crowther et al. (2009, p. 59) state: “But no matter how assertive or sophisticated it may be, teacher leadership cannot engender improvement on a sustained basis in and of itself...”. While collaborative leadership should not, therefore, be viewed as the sole factor influencing school outcomes, it is one significant factor in promoting positive change and outcomes in schools.

Difficulties with collaborative leadership

Whilst much of the current literature promotes the concept of collaborative leadership as being an effective, even preferred model for leadership within schools, there are some suggestions that this endorsement is too hasty. Lindahl (2008) comments that schools have struggled to successfully implement a shared leadership model. Lindahl (2008) argues that schools have not clearly delineated administrative and leadership roles, and consequently teacher leaders have often shared in administrative duties

rather than participating in a leadership role. This lack of distinction between leadership and administration has resulted in teacher leaders feeling unsatisfied with their role. While distributed leadership has remained a significant and accepted concept in the field of educational leadership, the trend to conceptualise leadership structures in schools dichotomously as focused or distributed can be problematic (Gronn, 2008). Gronn (2008) suggests that this view of leadership may oversimplify the multiplicity of leadership structures in schools today. Gronn (2008, p. 144) also questions the way in which ‘distributed’ or other forms of shared leadership are often “...extolled as solutions to problems associated with improving students’ learning”. As previously mentioned, the relationship between collaborative leadership models and school improvement instead depends on multiple factors such as a school’s culture and willingness to change (Harris, 2008).

Storey (2004) reports on a case study which was designed to examine leadership approaches in selected English schools over a three year period. Storey (2004, p. 253) highlights the potentially disadvantageous aspects of distributed leadership, stating that the existence of multiple, competing leaders within the school organisation could result in conflict and tension: “The experiment in distributed leadership...surfaced fundamental tensions between competing leaders, namely the head teacher and significant others occupying positions as key subject leaders”. Furthermore, Storey (2004, p. 252) claims that the term ‘distributed leadership’ could be viewed by some with suspicion, as the term, “...simply reflects a re-labelling of ... more established concepts”. Timperley (2005) comments that a possible difficulty associated with distributed leadership is a lack of cohesion within a school community. This can occur when the staff who are involved in school leadership activities hold different opinions from those of the principal or senior leaders of the school: “Those to whom leadership is distributed may have different agendas from the ‘official’ leaders...” (Timperley, 2005, p. 410). Reid, Brain and Boyes (2004) also examine issues relating to the growing complexity of school organisations, brought about by the increasing number of leadership positions. Their 2004 study revealed that some teacher leaders felt increased pressure to meet the demands and expectations of their leadership roles. They also highlight concerns relating to the lack of effective leadership preparation and support provided to teacher leaders, commenting that leadership courses may lack relevance or practical application (Reid et al., 2004). Richardson (2003) explains

that with the growing expectation that teachers will play a role in school leadership, support in the form of leadership training needs to be provided. These issues of role tensions and the need for more directed leadership preparation are explored later in the chapter and related more specifically to the experiences of those in middle leadership positions.

Collaborative leadership and middle leaders

The school principal is no longer solely capable of performing or being accountable for leadership tasks; rather, educational leadership is viewed as a right and responsibility of all stakeholders (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Harris, 2003a; Lambert, 2003). Busher (2001, p. 87) explained that middle leaders, in particular subject leaders, can play a crucial role in school leadership: “As post-holders in the formal organization of a school [subject leaders and headteachers] play a variety of roles in taking change forward”. With the movement toward sharing and decentralising leadership in schools, Busher and Harris (1999) stated that the role of the middle leader, in particular, has become a significant leadership position within schools. They explain that in order for schools to become more effective, there is “...a need to reconceptualise school leadership more broadly to include leadership at a middle management level” (Busher & Harris, 1999, p. 305). With this in mind, the next section reviews the recent literature on the role and influence of middle leaders in education.

Defining middle leaders

The term ‘middle leader’ can be thought of as an overarching title encompassing a number of related educational positions: subject leaders, such as heads of department; pastorally-focused leaders, such as student service coordinators or year level coordinators; and leaders of specialised programs. The definition of what constitutes an educational middle leader is largely related to the hierarchical organisational structure of schools. Busher and Harris (1999) explain that:

...in hierarchical terms the head of department is a middle manager. He or she is not part of the senior management team, responsible for the overall strategic development of a school, but someone responsible for the operational work of others, namely classroom teachers (p. 306).

Within secondary school organisational structures, teachers and ancillary staff are typically organised within subject, pastoral or specialised program departments. Gunter and Fitzgerald (2007, p. 4) explain: “Between [the] senior level and teachers is a group of middle leaders whose primary responsibility lies in a curriculum/subject area, year level or the pastoral care and discipline of students”. These departments or teams require a coordinator to organise and supervise the work being carried out. Middle leaders fulfil this function and, in doing so, are accountable to a school’s senior leaders for the work of the staff in their specific area of responsibility (Busher, Hammersley-Fletcher & Turner, 2007). Middle leaders can be thought of as providing the bridge between the teaching staff and the executive staff within their school (White, 2000). The bridging or linking function is one of the central attributes in defining a middle leader. White (2000, p. 85), describes the middle leadership position of Curriculum Area Middle Managers: “Their role, like that of all middle managers in schools, is seen as being part-classroom teacher and part-administrator, a situation that sees them considered as the link between teachers and senior administration...”. Despite these commonalities, there is no complete and commonly understood definition of the role and position of middle leaders (Weller, 2001).

Gunter and Fitzgerald (2007) propose that schools need to begin to question assumptions about leadership hierarchies and focus more squarely on the leadership of learning. They claim that educators should aim to link leadership to learning and students, rather than to structures and roles, saying “Linking leadership with hierarchical structure is a barrier to the productive development of both adult and student participation in work” (Gunter & Fitzgerald, 2007, p. 13). Another problematic feature of defining middle leadership is the confusion between the terms ‘management’ and ‘leadership’. Hallinger and Snidvongs (2008) draw a distinction between leadership and management, explaining that management is about developing efficient strategies to achieve an organisation’s goals, whereas leadership is about determining the vision and goals on which an organisation will focus its resources and efforts. In many schools, people commonly referred to as ‘middle

managers' actually adopt a leadership role (Glover & Miller, 1999a). Weller (2001) states that the role of department heads for instance, is to carry out the functions of both manager and leader. Glover and Miller (1999b) point out that the focus of middle leaders has changed from a traditional administrative function to one of leader and change agent. Middle leaders have to find an equilibrium between their management and leadership roles (Glover & Miller, 1999b). For the purpose of this study, the term 'middle leadership' is interpreted as encompassing both the leadership and managerial/administrative functions of the position.

The function of middle leadership

The roles and responsibilities of middle leaders in secondary schools are diverse. Their job descriptions are often complex and can vary widely according to school and department (Weller, 2001). In recent years, researchers have attempted to document and categorise the specific duties of this group of professionals and have identified common tasks undertaken by middle leaders. The focus of most of these studies has been on subject-based middle leaders such as heads of department or learning area coordinators, and the specific roles of pastoral or program-based middle leaders have tended to be overlooked.

Although much has been written about the leadership roles of school principals, there is comparatively little research literature on the middle leadership roles. White (2002) explained the subject-based middle leadership role of Curriculum Area Middle Manager as being a learning area architect. This role is concerned with: the development of a collegial culture within a program area; assisting in whole-school improvement; encouraging communication with learning area staff and school members; dealing with student management issues; and becoming a general change agent within their learning area (White, 2002). Brown and Rutherford (1998) further classified the leadership functions of middle leaders by outlining five leadership roles of the head of department. These five aspects of leadership draw upon Murphy's (1992) leadership typology designed for school principalship and apply the roles to the head of department position. The five roles of the middle leadership are identified as servant leader, organisational architect, moral educator, social architect and

professional leader (Brown & Rutherford, 1998). Harris (2000) and Busher and Harris (1999), on the other hand, both refer to the work of Glover, Gleeson, Gough and Johnson (1998) in their definition of the four key dimensions that make up the middle leadership duties of heads of department. Busher and Harris (1999) state that the first dimension relates to the bridging role of middle leaders between the policies and aims of a school's senior leaders and their implementation at a classroom level. The second dimension is the middle leader's role in building and nurturing a culture of collegiality and collaboration within their program area, as well as articulating and promoting a shared vision. Middle leaders also assume the responsibility for monitoring and assisting teachers and students in their development of skills and knowledge, and act as representatives of their program area within a whole-school context (Busher & Harris, 1999; Harris, 2000).

Busher (2005) identified six aspects of a middle leader's role; these include having a clear vision for their department, and having the will to bring about this vision and implement policies through the power of their position. According to Busher (2005), middle leaders will also work with staff to take action and achieve goals, as well as coordinate the department administratively. The final two key functions of middle leaders in Busher's model are to negotiate in varying contexts with others, such as senior leaders, other middle leaders or teachers and work as an effective classroom teacher. Similarly, Gunter and Fitzgerald (2007) also outline six roles of middle leaders. Included in Gunter and Fitzgerald's model are the middle leader's responsibility for teaching and student outcomes within their department and the management of department resources. Additionally, Gunter and Fitzgerald (2007) highlight the need for middle leaders to work with staff to achieve department and school goals, lead staff through activities such as mentoring or coaching, implement policies, and contribute to wider whole-school development processes. Lastly, Dinham (2007) explores the qualities of effective middle leaders, including subject, pastoral and program-based leaders and in doing so, highlights some important functions of middle leadership. According to Dinham (2007), effective middle leaders have detailed and current professional knowledge, they role model best practice for their colleagues, and have high professional expectations of themselves. They promote the work of their department within the school and play an important role in planning, developing and sharing programs and resources for their area of

responsibility. Effective middle leaders place a high value on teacher learning and provided a clear vision and direction for staff working in their department (Dinham, 2007). Finally and importantly, Dinham (2007) adds that effective middle leaders have a clear focus on student learning and work to monitor and improve student achievement within their program. According to White (2000), the role of middle leaders can be thought of in two parts, the administrator and classroom teacher. These two aspects of the position are dealt with in the next two sections.

Middle leader as teacher

White (2002, p. 8) states that one role of a subject-based middle leader is as an *instructional leader* and “in this role the [middle leader] focuses on achieving the best possible teaching and learning in their area”. This role, of course, involves a middle leader not only focusing on meeting the educational aims in their own classes, but also motivating other teachers in their area to do the same (White, 2002). White (2002) identifies other instructional functions of subject-based middle leaders; these are: evaluating the relevance and quality of programmes and assessments; providing resources; and organising professional development for other teachers in their program area. Similarly, Brown and Rutherford (1998, p. 79) suggest that heads of department can be seen as a leading professional, a role that “...focuses on improving teaching, learning and achievement in the department...”. As leading professionals, middle leaders must be aware of all new developments in curriculum matters and be very capable and skilful teachers in their own right (Brown & Rutherford, 1998).

Although their role is diverse, McCormick (2000) claims that middle leaders still consider their role as a classroom teacher to be their first priority. Brown and Rutherford (1998) explain that, in their study of heads of department, classroom teaching consumed at least 80% of a middle leader’s time and for this reason many middle leaders considered it to be their major role. Similarly, in Busher’s (2005) study of middle leaders, two-thirds of middle leaders’ time was spent in the classroom. Interestingly, Mayers and Zepeda (2002) report that many subject-based middle leaders view their role as a classroom teacher separately from their role as a middle leader. They perceive themselves primarily as teachers, with their position as a Head of Department being a secondary role (Mayers & Zepeda, 2002). Likewise, in

a study exploring the professional identities of middle leaders, Busher (2005, p. 148) explains that, “central to middle leaders’ professional identities was continuing to be experienced and effective classroom practitioners who could give advice and guidance to their colleagues and to students on this basis”. Those middle leaders in Busher’s study (2005) perceived their teaching role to be an important aspect of their professional identity, and identified themselves with their teaching colleagues rather than with the school leadership team. Likewise, their departmental colleagues “...perceived middle leaders as one of themselves, not part of the management hierarchy, although middle leaders visibly occupied promoted posts, in some cases of some seniority in their schools” (Busher, 2005, p. 148).

Middle leader as administrator

In addition to their leadership and teaching duties, the administrative functions of middle leaders appear to be increasing and include a multitude of tasks (Mayers & Zepeda, 2002). Weller (2001) identifies several of these administrative tasks, some of which include the preparation of program budgets and assisting with the selection and interviewing process for new teachers. Glover and Miller (1999b) identify additional administrative duties such as: filing; reprographics; organising and planning meetings; writing advertisements for job vacancies; preparing cover for absent colleagues; staff appraisal and managing and maintaining resources. With these increasing administrative responsibilities, there is a concern that middle leaders can become more focused on administrative tasks and ‘crisis management’ than the other dimensions of their role, such as planning and leading (Brown & Rutherford, 1998).

The influence of middle leadership

There is increasing awareness of the importance of middle leaders within a school’s organisational structure (White, 2000), and the influence of middle leadership positions, especially in relation to whole-school development, needs to be considered. Much of the literature on the role of middle leaders highlights the importance of this unique position. In fact Weller (2001) asserts that department

heads, as middle leaders, have the potential to be the most influential people in a school's organisational structure. Many argue that educators holding middle leadership positions have the power to influence not only their own area of responsibility, but also the wider school community. Brown, Rutherford and Boyle (2000) assert:

...the department is the key focus for change within the school and the heads of department, with responsibility for a manageable group of people, can enable successful change within the group and thus contribute to whole school improvement (p. 242).

Middle leaders' role as a conduit between a school's senior leaders and classroom teachers means that middle leaders play a significant role in whole-school development (Weller, 2001). Middle leaders, in this way, are able to communicate the educational plans and policies proposed by a school's senior leadership directly to the teaching staff, who will be able to implement the proposals or policies at the 'chalkface', thus enabling the actualisation of school plans and policies. Busher and Harris (1999, p. 315) capture the significance of the role of heads of department in developing a collaborative department culture, saying: "Within this middle management role, more than any other, is the real potential of organisational change and improvement".

Middle leaders can also play a direct role in whole-school planning and decision-making (Brown, Boyle & Boyle, 1999). Glover and Miller (1999a) identify three areas in which subject-based middle leaders can exercise a key leadership role at a whole-school level. They can develop and articulate whole-school policies and aims. Subject leaders can also contribute to the strategic planning of the school and the writing of whole-school teaching and learning policies (Glover & Miller, 1999a). Dinham (2007) encourages schools and education systems to tap into the skills and influence of middle leaders in building stronger student outcomes, arguing that typically, the leadership potential of middle leaders is under-utilised and the role not widely recognised outside of their school context. The challenge for school is to fully acknowledge the importance and potential of middle leadership positions.

The authority of middle leaders

Middle leaders are experiencing an intensification of their responsibilities, with workload demands consuming time at school and after school (Fitzgerald, 2009). However, this increase in responsibility has not necessarily equated to greater authority or heightened influence at the whole-school level, so that middle leaders attempt to "...fulfil their extensive responsibilities with ... limited formal authority" (Bennett, Woods, Wise & Newton, 2007, p. 460). Although middle leadership is commonly viewed by researchers as crucial to school operation and improvement, there is evidence that schools, in general, do not fully utilise the leadership potential of their middle leaders (Weller, 2001). The recent attention paid to middle leadership positions in education worldwide has stemmed from a perceived failure to develop or expand the position within schools (Brown et al., 1999). One explanation for this is that schools may under-value the potential influence of the middle leadership position (White, 2002). Weller (2001) reports that in a survey of secondary school department heads many believed that they should play a larger role in whole-school decision-making. Weller's conclusion is that a lack of authority and voice limited the effectiveness of these positions. It may, however, take more than an increased awareness of the importance of middle leaders to improve their authority within schools. Middle leaders are often too absorbed in their specific administrative responsibilities to have sufficient time to engage in broader strategic planning (Brown & Rutherford, 1998). Thus, if their leadership potential is to be realised, there needs to be a shift in the prioritising of their many responsibilities, with an emphasis placed on their whole-school leadership potential (Weller, 2001).

The tensions of middle leadership

There are a number of tensions inherent in middle leadership positions, including role conflict and role ambiguity (Weller, 2001). A conflict exists because of the dual function of a middle leader's role as both teacher and administrator. Middle leaders are typically in a complex position, in that they are neither fully a teacher nor an administrator (Brown, Rutherford & Boyle, 2000). Because of this, middle leaders often have a sense of divided loyalty between the senior leaders and the teachers in their department (Weller, 2001). According to Weller (2001, p. 73), "... [department

heads] perform a range of responsibilities that call for the allegiance of both administrator and peer alike”. Middle leaders also experience “...a form of dual accountability...”, where they are accountable to their school’s senior leaders, as well as to their own department or team of staff (Fitzgerald, 2009, p. 63). Bennett et al. (2007) in a review of empirical research relating to middle leadership positions in secondary schools, likewise highlight the conflicting loyalties expected of middle leaders as contributing to a sense of role tension. Bennett et al. (2007, p. 455) explain that a tension exists, “...between expectations that their role had a whole-school focus and their loyalty to their department”. Additionally, the expectation that middle leaders maintain a strong sense of collegiality within their department conflicts with the expectation that middle leaders will undertake professional appraisal of their colleagues (Bennett et al., 2007). Busher et al. (2007, p. 409) explained that middle leaders work with multiple groups and levels within a school’s organisational structure and as such, “...middle leaders are sometimes viewed with suspicion by other members of their departments who question whether they are really working for the interests of the department or for those of the senior leadership team”. Brown et al. (1999) note that this divide between middle leaders and others will cause some middle leaders to feel a sense of isolation.

Storey (2004) explains that the presence of multiple leaders within a school organisation can also be a catalyst for tension and conflicts. Storey’s (2004, p. 253) research into distributed models of leadership found that: “These multiple leaders came increasingly into conflict as their competing visions, models and ideas of ‘success’, ‘good practice’, appropriate performance measurement at the whole-school, departmental and individual levels, became increasingly evident”. A middle leader’s role necessitates their interaction with many members of the school community, including senior leaders, teachers, support staff and other middle leaders (Busher, 2005). This need to operate in many different organisational contexts may create tension about the unclear division of responsibilities and conflicting leadership styles. Moreover, the expectations and agendas of middle leaders don’t always reflect or match those of the senior leaders, especially with regard to perceived priorities and timeframes (Storey, 2004). Storey (2004) warns that conflicting perceptions such as these can lead to divisiveness within the broader school, if leaders appeal to other staff members for support.

Aside from role tensions and conflicts, middle leaders also face the issue of role ambiguity. According to Mayers and Zepeda (2002), role ambiguity occurs when a person is uncertain about the expectations of their position. Role ambiguity can lead to decreased effectiveness and job satisfaction, and increased stress (Mayer & Zepeda, 2002). In part, this problem of definition stems from a lack of clarity in delineating the responsibilities of middle and senior leaders: “The distinction between middle and senior management remains blurred and leadership functions are still not adequately delineated or defined” (Busher & Harris, 1999, pp. 305-306). White (2000) explains that role ambiguity and conflict exist largely because of the lack of training and time given to middle leaders, which can result in increased stress for middle leaders. These concerns need to be recognised and addressed by schools, in order for middle leaders to function more effectively. Issues relating to the training of middle leaders and the effectiveness of leadership development programs are explored in the following section.

Professional leadership development

The need for leadership development

Whilst the ability to lead is often thought of as an innate quality possessed by individuals, leadership skills and approaches can, of course, be learnt. Dinham (2007, p. 77) explains that training is effective and useful in helping middle leaders build leadership skills. He claims that “...while not everyone is cut out to be a leader, those with potential can develop and be mentored into the role”. Scott and Webber (2008, p. 764) propose a framework for educational leadership development, based on the assumption that “...good leadership can be taught and nurtured”. Whilst it appears that much of a middle leader’s professional learning is acquired through informal approaches, Scott and Webber (2008, p. 765) assert that “...professional development opportunities must be provided for teachers aspiring or newly promoted to administrative or leadership opportunities”. Likewise, Busch, O’Brien and Spangler (2005, p. 107) suggest that leadership development activities are effective “...in helping prospective leaders to learn about leadership theory and practice and to

identify and develop competencies necessary to address leadership challenges and opportunities found in current school environments”.

Informal approaches to leadership development

Approaches to leadership development can be classified as informal or formal. Informal learning might include the observation of other middle leaders, as well as implicitly drawing upon past experiences when taking action or making decisions. Formal learning may involve more systematic activities, such as such as undertaking action research or accredited courses (Scott & Webber, 2008). The comparative effectiveness of these approaches in leadership training has been the source of some debate. Turner (2000) explores the self-perceptions of subject heads of department in relation to their professional training and preparation. Turner (2000) explains that much of a middle leader’s learning about their position occurs prior to their appointment, through informal learning experiences. Middle leaders will draw upon their past professional experiences and observations from working with other colleagues who have held middle leadership positions. Turner (2000) identifies that all of the middle leaders interviewed had undergone some degree of professional socialisation, in that they used other middle leaders at their school or previous schools as professional role models. Much of the professional training for middle leaders may be self-directed, experiential learning, based on the problems and issues that are overcome on a day-to-day basis. It appears that much of a middle leader’s professional knowledge and expertise tend to be implicitly learnt through previous teaching experience, or through his or her day-to-day work experience in the position (Turner, 2000).

On this theme, Turner (2006) draws on a study of secondary school subject leaders to emphasise the importance of informal learning in the development of middle leaders skills and knowledge. Turner (2006, p. 433) argues that, schools tend to focus on providing formal professional development opportunities for middle leaders, whereas “...more attention from senior managers in schools needs to be paid to the precise nature of what, when and how [informal learning] is taking place”. The implication is that senior management needs to focus on drawing out and making explicit the implicit knowledge that middle leaders have gained through their professional

experiences. Strategies such as mentoring, reflective practice and professional feedback are important for the support of inexperienced middle leaders (Turner, 2006). Middle leaders may also undertake structured leadership or management training courses, as discussed in the next section; however, the relevance and practical application of such programs has been challenged (Turner, 2000). In the debate surrounding the effectiveness of formal and informal models of leadership development, Glatter (2009, p. 235) argues that it is important that a school “...moves beyond formal programs to promote work-based learning and [leadership development] through career development”. However, Glatter (2009, p. 228) continues, “raw experience is not a sufficient guide to learning...”; leaders need to be encouraged and supported to reflect on their experiences in a purposeful manner, in order to extract meaningful and applicable learning.

Formal approaches to leadership development

Whilst the consensus of research into middle leadership is that much of a middle leader’s professional development occurs through experiential or work-based learning opportunities, Scott and Webber (2008) suggest that a more systematic approach to leadership development may be necessary. Their argument is that leadership development is too often heavily reliant on informal or experiential learning, and that schools need to focus on providing planned, sustained leadership support that incorporates both informal and formal learning opportunities. Scott and Webber’s (2008) concern is that a reliance on informal, unstructured leadership development strategies, including some forms of mentoring or peer-learning, may actually embed less effective leadership skills and practices within schools:

...too frequently leaders are not provided or indeed expected to access ongoing systematic professional development other than *ad hoc*, hit-and-miss on-the-job learning. With the dynamic nature of today’s workplace, experiential opportunities alone are inadequate to meet the complexities of leaders’ work and personal lives (p. 773).

Formalised leadership training programs, then, have an important place in building leadership capacity in schools. Busch et al. (2005) have examined the effectiveness

of formal leadership development programs. They find that leadership formation programs can increase the participants' interest in pursuing further leadership training, as well as increasing their willingness to take on leadership activities within their schools. Furthermore, leadership programs have the potential to improve participants' ability to carry out leadership tasks and responsibilities (Busch et al., 2005). However, to ensure the effectiveness and relevance of formal leadership development programs, the suitability of the program to the school's organisational climate and context needs to be considered, as well as the ways in which the program integrates features of experiential learning (Glatter, 2009). Unlike traditional mentoring processes which typically focus on professional socialisation and a "...directional flow of expertise from mentor to protégé..." (McGregor, 2011, p. 60), McGregor (2011) examines leadership coaching and argues that coaching instead places an emphasis on a shared process of inquiry, learning and action. McGregor (2011) examined the effectiveness of leadership coaching as a means of supporting school leaders, and suggests that:

...the coaching process with its emphasis on building trust through collaborative inquiry enables the leader to continue his or her focus on self learning while simultaneously modeling how learning can be a shared value that builds positive school cultures (pp.71-72).

Bush and Glover (2005) evaluated the effectiveness of a leadership development program that was focused on providing an experiential approach to leadership development, incorporating methods such as active learning and coaching. Bush and Glover (2005, p. 237) conclude that "a judicious blend of theory, research and participants' experience, customised to meet the specific requirements of each client group, provides the best prospect of successful leadership development in education".

The content of leadership instruction

We also need to consider the qualities and attributes of leadership that are promoted by leadership development initiatives in business management. Hallinger and Snidvongs (2008) explore recent trends in business management and consider their relevance to education. They suggest that schools have tended to emphasise the

development of leadership skills over managerial skills, and propose that “...preparation and development programs in education should in fact be focused on both leadership and management” (Hallinger and Snidvongs, 2008, p. 27). Glatter (2009) highlights adaptability, creativity and analytical skills as vital attributes of school leaders if they are to deal effectively with the complex demands of school leadership. Similarly, Glatter (2009, p. 229) emphasises the importance of managerial skills of educational leaders: “We must take management as seriously as leadership and the two must be closely linked if the school’s aims are to be achieved”. Other researchers point out that more attention needs to be paid to the emotional learning of middle leaders, to fully equip them to handle the pressures and tensions of the position (Turner, 2006). Likewise, Woods, Woods and Cowie (2009) suggest that, in order to fully prepare leaders for all dimensions of their work, leadership development training should systematically address ethical, social and emotional competencies, as well as technical skills and knowledge. Scott and Webber’s (2008) 4L framework for educational leadership development recommends that effective leadership preparation should also take into account factors such as a leader’s career stage and aspirations. Effective leadership programs should aim to promote visionary leaders with the creative, reflective, interpretive and problem-solving skills needed to successfully negotiate modern organisations. Whatever approach to leadership development is taken, schools need to consider developing a long-term plan for identifying and developing leadership amongst middle leaders and teachers, in order to ensure a strong future leadership capacity within their school (Rhodes, Brundrett & Nevill, 2008).

Summary

There has been sustained interest in collaborative leadership models in education over many years. Interest in collaborative approaches to school leadership stems from a belief that dispersing leadership duties amongst multiple stakeholders can have a positive influence on whole-school development and school outcomes. In collaborative leadership models, middle leaders are seen to play an important role in promoting the objectives of a school and building leadership capacity among other members of the school community. There is a growing awareness of the importance

and potential influence of middle leaders in schools, and issues relating to the complex, intermediary nature of these positions have surfaced. Middle leaders are required to undertake diverse and sometimes conflicting tasks, which can result in role tensions and a lack of clarity about the exact nature and expectations of the position. Constructs developed to capture the multiple functions of middle leadership positions highlight the significant roles that middle leaders play as teachers, leaders and administrators. Despite the complex and sometimes fraught nature of middle leadership, much of the training for the position appears to be undertaken prior to appointment and, once on the job, through experiential learning. Questions remain as to the comparative benefit and relevance of formal leadership development programs, and the most effective means of preparing middle leaders for the duties and pressures of the position.

Compared to senior leadership roles, such as school principalship, the research literature on middle leadership positions is limited and much is focused on subject leadership roles, such as heads of department. There is a definite need for further research relating to the specific experiences and needs of pastoral-focused or specialist middle leadership positions. This study, having examined the roles and perspectives of subject, pastoral and program-based middle leaders, aims to extend current understandings about the nature and issues relating to these middle leadership positions. Through qualitative and quantitative methods, this study examines several of the issues highlighted in the review of literature, including an examination of the multiple functions of middle leadership positions and an exploration of issues such as the existence of role conflict, the degree of role clarity, the training and support requirements of middle leaders, and the professional perceptions of middle leaders. The next chapter explains the research methods used in this study and considers the issues of validity, reliability and ethics.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Overview

A mixed methods research design was selected for this study of secondary school, middle leadership positions. A sequential, mixed methods design was applied in order to provide a detailed, holistic view of the complexities implicit within middle leadership positions. The research involved two distinct phases of data collection. The first phase employed qualitative methods of data collection and analysis, including document analysis and semi-structured interviews. The second phase of the research involved the administration of a quantitative survey and the statistical analysis of the resultant quantitative data. This chapter examines the concepts and assumptions underpinning mixed methods research designs. It explores the issues of reliability and validity, as well as the ethical considerations relevant to the research project. Finally, the research methods and sampling procedures are described.

Mixed methods research

The techniques used to gather data for this study included the qualitative data collection methods of document analysis and semi-structured interviews, as well as the administration of a quantitative survey. The integration of both qualitative and quantitative research methods within a single study is referred to as mixed methods research design (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Mixed methods research is defined by Creswell (2005, p. 510) as, "...a procedure for collecting, analysing and 'mixing' both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study to understand a research problem". Before examining mixed methods research more specifically, it is necessary to consider the nature and assumptions of both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

Qualitative methodology refers to “...research that produces descriptive data about people’s words and their observable behaviour” (Freebody, 2003, p. 37). Qualitative methods can be beneficial in that they are able to take into account the context of the study and can provide rich, descriptive data (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Qualitative research is based on a naturalistic inquiry, whereby the researcher aims to document “...the natural flow of events and processes and how participants interpret them” (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993, p. 372). According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2003), qualitative research in education has two major purposes: to gather a holistic, descriptive picture of the educational process and environment and to specifically describe what occurs within that natural environment. A qualitative methodology assumes that: what is being observed or documented is influenced significantly by its context or environment; there are multiple realities; individual’s perceptions and values are important in understanding the phenomenon (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993); the researcher cannot be separated from what is being studied, and generalisability is neither vital nor desirable (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003).

Wiersma and Jurs (2009, p.14) define quantitative research as research that is “...more closely associated with deduction, reasoning from general principles to specific situations”. The purpose of quantitative research differs from qualitative research in that it is focused on identifying and explaining *relationships and causes*, rather than on understanding a social phenomenon (Wiersma and Jurs, 2009). Quantitative research is founded on the characteristics and assumptions of positivism, in that “positivism bases knowledge on observable facts and rejects speculation about ultimate origins” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p. 7). Tashakkori & Teddlie (1998) explain that the positivist approach is based upon the assumptions that: there is a single reality; enquiry is value free; causal relationships exist; the researcher can be separated from what is being studied; and generalisability is achievable and desirable.

A mixed methods research design deliberately combines different research methods within one study as a way of collecting different types of data (Greene & Caracelli, 1997). Creswell (2005) explains that a mixed methods research design requires researchers to have an understanding of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. A researcher will select a mixed methods approach when they wish to combine both qualitative data with quantitative data (Creswell, 2005). There are several ways in which a mixed methods design can be planned and undertaken.

Creswell (2005) outlines three types of mixed methods designs. The first is the triangulation design in which qualitative and quantitative data are collected concurrently and then the results combined to form a response to the research problem. The second type of mixed methods design is the explanatory design in which quantitative data are collected first, followed by the collection of qualitative data, which is designed to explain and expand on the quantitative findings (Creswell, 2005). The type of mixed methods design used in this study is the third type, the exploratory design. According to Creswell (2005, p. 516), the exploratory mixed methods design is “...the procedure of first gathering qualitative data to explore a phenomenon, and then collecting quantitative data to explain relationships found in the qualitative data”. The rationale for using this sequence of data collection is to use the quantitative data in the second phase of data collection to extend and test the qualitative findings. Further, this sequence of data collection allows for a quantitative instrument, in this case the survey, to be developed from the qualitative data. Creswell (2005, p. 521) states that in the exploratory design, “...the substantial qualitative data collection becomes a means for developing or locating quantitative instruments, forming categorical information for later quantitative data collection, or developing generalizations from a few, initial qualitative cases”.

Advantages of a mixed methods research design

A mixed methods research approach was applied in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issues and perceptions relating to middle leadership positions. Greene and Caracelli (1997, p. 7) explain that, “the underlying rationale for mixed method inquiry is to understand more fully, to generate deeper and broader insights, to develop important knowledge claims that respect a wider range of interests and perspective”. Traditionally, educational research has been considered to be predominantly qualitatively based, however educational researchers have become aware that it is often useful and necessary to combine the two methodologies (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Pring (2000, p. 43) comments that “there is a danger in educational research...of drawing too sharp a contrast between different kinds of activity and different kinds of enquiry”. Scott (1996, p. 59) explains, “...the two methods do not belong within separate research paradigms and thus can sensibly be

used within the same investigation”. Another of the major benefits gained from applying a mixed methodology in this study, is the opportunity it provided to triangulate results (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Triangulation commonly refers to the convergence of multiple methods and/or data sources within the single study of a phenomenon (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The triangulation of results using both the qualitative and quantitative data was important in enhancing the validity of the research as “it improves the quality of data that are collected and the accuracy of the researcher’s interpretations” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Triangulation is explored further in the explanation of validity and reliability.

Not only does a mixed methods research design allow for data triangulation, it provides complementary data on one phenomenon, and can also improve the scope and depth of a study (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). By the implementing the qualitative phase of the research first, the researcher was able to access to rich, descriptive detail about the organisational functions of middle leadership, as well as the unique perceptions and experiences of individual school leaders. This was important in developing a deep, initial understanding of the various aspects and issues relating to middle leadership positions. The qualitative results were then used to inform the development of the quantitative survey instrument administered in the second phase of the study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Using the findings from the qualitative phase, the researcher was then able to identify key issues and factors impacting middle leadership positions, which then formed the focus of the quantitative survey.

Considerations of a mixed methods research design

Mixed methods is a complex research design that can produce extensive data, yet it requires the researcher to have a strong understanding of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Researchers undertaking a mixed methods research design need to be able to design both qualitative and quantitative instruments, apply different skills when collecting data, as well as analyse and interpret both forms of data. The exploratory design approach, as used initially in this study, is particularly time intensive because of the large amount of data to be collected and the time taken in the development the quantitative instrument (Creswell, 2005).

Research objectives

The study sought to qualify and quantify the perceptions of middle leaders and senior school administrators about the middle leadership role. The research investigated five key questions relating to middle leadership positions, including:

1. How is the middle leadership role explained in school documents?
2. How do senior leaders and middle leaders explain the middle leadership role?
3. What does a middle leader self-report measure reveal about middle leaders' perception of their role?
4. What are the attributes of middle leadership and the influences on their framing and realisation?
5. How can middle leadership be developed?

Overview of research design

Table 3.1 specifies how the separate stages of the mixed methods research design were applied consecutively and combined to address each of the five research questions. Additionally, it illustrates how each phase of the research design conceptually underpins the subsequent phases of the process.

Table 3.1

Overview of research design

Research Questions	Methods	Conceptual Underpinning
How is the middle leadership role explained in school documents?	School policy document analysis.	Literature review.
How do senior leaders and middle leaders explain the middle leadership role?	Interviewing of senior and middle leaders.	Literature review and document analysis results.
What does a middle leader self-report measure reveal about middle leaders' perception of their role?	Construction of a measure and measurement.	Literature review, document analysis results and interview analysis results.
What are the attributes of middle leadership and the influences on their framing and realisation?	Document analysis, interviewing and measurement.	Scaffolding of empirical findings with the literature review.
How can middle leadership be developed?	Document analysis, interviewing and measurement.	Scaffolding of the empirical findings with the literature review.

Qualitative phase**Stage one: Document analysis**

The usefulness of document analysis as a research method is based on the assumption that, "a person's or group's conscious and unconscious beliefs, attitudes, values, and ideas often are revealed in their communications" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 482). A document analysis was undertaken as the first phase of data collection and involved the gathering of documentation relating to secondary school middle leadership positions. The documents collected included school position descriptions detailing the roles and key responsibilities of various middle leadership positions. Where available, documents outlining the organisational structure of participating schools, in either diagrammatic or descriptive forms, were also collected.

Sampling

Ten schools made up the sample for the document analysis. These schools were selected using a purposive sampling method aimed at obtaining a sample of schools

that was typical of the types of schools in metropolitan, Western Australian secondary schools. In order to further improve the final sample, care was taken to ensure that the sample included a number of schools from both the public and private educational sectors, with five state schools and five private schools making up the sample. A series of three rounds of letters were mailed out to schools as a means of initial contact, and follow-up telephone interviews with the school Principal or Deputy Principal were also conducted before the final sample was confirmed. Whenever possible, an informal meeting with the relevant senior leader of each school was organised, in order to discuss the documentation being provided for analysis and to clarify structural and organisational features specific to the individual school.

Content analysis

The documents collected were analysed by applying the content analysis techniques of ascribing the data to formulated categories, coding data, then interpreting the data for meaning (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). An analysis of the documents collected for this study was conducted through a process of qualitative content analysis. According to White and Marsh (2006, p. 39) the aim of qualitative content analysis “...is to depict the ‘big picture’ of a given subject, displaying conceptual depth through thoughtful arrangement of a wealth of detailed observations”. For this study, the school documents were analysed with the purpose of identifying the specific roles and responsibilities commonly expected of middle leaders in Western Australian secondary schools. During content analysis, the initial focus of the researcher is on the relevant research questions which need to be answered: “The questions guide [the researcher’s] initial approach to the data, but the process is inductive not deductive” (White & Marsh, 2006, p. 37).

The content analysis of the position description documents, was designed to elicit data pertinent to the first research question: How is the middle leadership role explained in school documents?

With this in mind, the documents were analysed by processes such as identifying key ideas and phrases, noting commonalities and exceptions, grouping and categorising data and coding data according to emergent themes. The process of coding data “is a

qualitative research method in which the researcher makes sense out of text data, divides it into text or image segments, labels the segments, examines codes for overlap and redundancy and collapses these codes into themes” (Creswell, 2005, p. 589). For this phase of the study, the data were coded according to nine themes or functions emerging from the documents. The themes developed from the content analysis process outline the core functions of middle leadership positions and include: coordinate the educational program; manage the operation of the department; meet accountability requirements; support student learning; work collaboratively and promote effective communication; build school community and culture; contribute to whole-school planning; promote and model professional excellence; and support and encourage department staff. Using these broad themes as an organising construct, the data were then divided into more specific categories. The categories outlined the specific duties and responsibilities of middle leaders, based on the various position descriptions analysed. The application of this coding method allowed for a detailed overview of the broader functions, as well as the individual tasks and responsibilities of educational middle leaders.

Stage two: Semi-structured interviews

Following the content analysis of school documents, the second stage of qualitative data collection was undertaken. This involved conducting interviews with middle leaders and senior leaders in order to gain insight into the experiences, expectations and perceptions surrounding this educational leadership position. The interview process was designed to address the second research question: How do senior leaders and middle leaders explain the middle leadership role? One of the main advantages of using interviews as a primary research method lies in the depth of data gathered (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2002). Creswell (2005) also notes that interviews allow researchers to elicit relevant information by directing specific questions. The information provided will typically be detailed, descriptive and personal. However, it is important for researchers to recognise that the information and observations provided by interviewees represent the views that they wish to share and thus can be subjective or incomplete. In this study one-on-one interviews were conducted with both middle leaders and senior leaders, in order to allow the researcher to compare

and contrast the information collected and to provide multiple perspectives on the questions. Another potential limitation of interviews is the need for researchers to summarise and interpret the interview data, thus presenting a filtered or distilled version of the participant's views (Creswell, 2005). Care was taken to accurately transcribe the interview data and to cross-check the data at different stages of the analysis process, in order to accurately represent the views and experiences of the middle leaders interviewed.

Design of the interview schedule

A semi-structured interview method was selected for this study. According to Cohen et al. (2002, p. 278), a semi-structured interview is “where topics and open-ended questions are written but the exact sequence and wording does not have to be followed with each respondent”. The advantage of using semi-structured interview techniques is the increased ability to draw comparisons between responses (Cohen et al., 2002). For this study, two interview schedules were designed; one to be used for the interviewing of middle leaders and another closely related schedule was constructed for the interviewing of senior leaders. The two schedules were designed alike so that, wherever appropriate, similar questions were asked of both sets of leaders (see Appendix A and Appendix B). This allowed for the later cross-comparison of interview data between middle and senior leaders, permitting the researcher to determine whether similarities or inconsistencies existed in the answers and opinions of the two levels of school leaders. There were some design differences in the two interview schedules, as some questions were relevant to only one leadership perspective. Senior leaders, for example, were asked what qualities they look for when appointing a middle leader, whereas middle leaders were asked to describe their transition from full-time classroom teacher to middle leader.

The literature review and findings from the document analysis provided the structure and focus for the design of the interview schedules. This was important to ensure that the interview questions were comprehensive in scope, and directly addressed the concerns and objectives of the study. Drawing upon earlier results, it was possible to develop a thematic structure for the interview schedule. The structure covered core constructs of middle leadership including: organisational functions and the impact and

influence of middle leadership; the expectations and experiences of middle leaders; factors influencing the position; and the support and professional development needs of middle leaders. Using these core areas, a schedule of 26 interview questions for middle leaders and 20 questions for senior leaders were written. A trial of the interview schedule resulted in minor refinements being made to phrasing and structure before finalising the interview schedule and conducting the first interviews.

Sampling

Twelve school leaders made up the sample of interview participants. The participants included one senior leader (typically a Deputy Principal) and three middle leaders from each of three Western Australian secondary schools. The interview subjects were individually questioned using a semi-structured interviewing method. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that the selected schools and individual interview participants represented a range of differing schools types, social demographics, and the variety of middle leadership positions found within such schools. As such, the sample included both independent and public schools. The three schools selected for the interview phase of data collection were selected from the original sample of schools developed for the document analysis. This was beneficial in that the researcher had prior understanding of the schools' organisational structures and thus could select schools offering a representative variety of middle leadership positions. Within each school, interviews were conducted with a subject-, pastoral- and program-based middle leader, as well as one senior leader. This sampling design allowed for the comparison of interview data, across schools and categories of middle leaders. The individual interview participants were selected in coordination with the school, to allow for a sample of middle leaders that would represent a variety of professional backgrounds and experiences.

Data collection

A semi-structured interviewing method was applied to allow for the comparison and categorisation of interview responses during the data analysis process (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Semi-structured interviews were useful in that they could be designed

to elicit responses to set questions, while still allowing “...some latitude in the breadth of relevance” (Freebody, 2003, p. 133). Interview schedules for senior and middle leaders were designed based upon the research questions and conceptual framework. Each of the interviews was recorded with the permission of the participants, in order to ensure comprehensiveness and accuracy, as well as to allow for later clarification. In doing so, validity is improved and the opportunity to check data for reliability is permitted (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993). The questions were phrased in a specific yet open-ended style, which allowed interviewees to provide rich discussion of their perceptions and experience, whilst still providing a clear focus for their responses. The interview schedules for both middle and senior leaders have been included in the appendices.

Data analysis

Following the interviews, a process of content analysis was undertaken; as with the document analysis, this involved categorising, coding and interpreting the data for meaning and alternative reasoning (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Each interview was transcribed into a table for each category of middle leader and for the senior leaders, to allow for cross-references. For each interview, a question-by-question summary of ideas was constructed, and all key quotations were transcribed verbatim. A thematic framework based on the literature review provided the basis for the coding process, with the interview data categorised into a thematic chart. As the coding of data progressed, emergent themes became apparent and were added to the original framework. These emergent themes included the changing nature of middle leadership positions, the affective responses of middle leaders and the personal support mechanisms used by middle leaders. The thematic charts were then used for the interpretation of data. The interview findings were organised with a focus on seven key aspects of the middle leadership position, including: the nature of middle leadership; the problems and limitations of the middle leadership positions; the organisational function of middle leaders; the qualities and skills of effective middle leaders; the professional development needs of middle leaders; the professional support and review of middle leaders; and the personal goals and experiences of middle leaders.

Measurement

Instrument development

In the second phase of data collection a measure was constructed based on the results of the qualitative phase. As Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998, p. 47) explain, by using a qualitative-quantitative research sequence, the researcher "...starts with qualitative data and analysis on a relatively unexplored topic, using the results to design a subsequent quantitative phase of the study". The purpose was to measure middle leaders' attitudes and perceptions of their role, aiming to gather broader data on themes arising from the interviews. Following the analysis of interview data and drawing on the emergent themes, five facets relating the experiences of middle leaders were identified for further examination. These five facets were: role clarity; role authority; role support; role value; and role fulfilment. As well as emerging from the qualitative findings, these five facets linked closely to the issues identified in the preliminary review of literature.

The five facets were not exactly the same as the specific functions and issues identified in the document analysis and the interviews. The facets needed to constitute a construct model amenable to measurement utilising the views of middle leaders. The instrument items in each scale needed to focus on one aspect of the role and be worded such that sensible responses would be elicited from the respondents. In this way, the measurement process was complementary to the qualitative methods but not exactly equivalent in content.

Having identified the five facets of middle leadership that would provide the structure and focus of the instrument, hierarchically staged descriptors were written. These descriptors were designed to allow for the measurement of a wide range of opinions and perceptions. With the aim of improving the validity of the measures, descriptors for each of the five facets were tested by a trial group of approximately twelve middle leaders. The hierarchical descriptors were ordered non-sequentially with the middle leaders asked to correctly reorder the items hierarchically. The results of the test allowed for the refinement of the descriptors and established greater consistency and accuracy of level descriptions. Instrument items were then written, formulated from the descriptors, ensuring that each item was clear, unambiguous and specific in focus.

Following further editing and refinement, the final instrument contained 36 items, which collectively measured middle leaders' perceptions of the five separate facets relating to their role.

According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2003, p. 131), "the basic assumption that underlies all attitudinal scales is that it is possible to discover attitudes by asking individuals to respond to a series of statements of preference". Attitude scales ask individuals to select, on a continuum, a response that best reflects their attitude about a topic (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). The survey instrument developed for this study used the Likert scale. The Likert scale is popular, well-tested, interval scale used in educational research, and it is commonly applied to measure the attitudes of individuals (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003 and Creswell, 2005). For the development of the middle leadership survey for this study, a scale with four response categories was used. Possible responses ranged from 4 (strongly agree) indicating the most positive response to 1 (strongly disagree) indicating the most negative response; no neutral response option was provided.

Sampling and data collection

Approximately fifty schools were invited to take part in the survey; of these, twenty-one schools made up the final sample. Fifteen state schools and six private schools participated in the study, with 125 completed surveys returned. The schools surveyed were predominantly metropolitan-based and represented a range of socio-economic and demographic contexts. Schools were selected to reflect a range of secondary schools in metropolitan Western Australia and thus, provide a typical sample to support the formation of more generalised findings from the results. Some regional schools were invited to participate in the study, but declined. Of the 125 surveys returned 27 respondents were pastoral-based leaders, 26 respondents were program leaders and 72 respondents were subject leaders. The number of years experience in middle leadership was also recorded for each of the 125 respondents: 52 respondents had between 1-5 years of experience in middle leadership; 28 respondents had between 6-10 years of experience; 16 respondents had between 11-15 years of experience and 29 respondents had 16 or more years of experience in middle

leadership. 46 of the respondents were males; 41 of the respondents were females and 38 respondents did not specify their gender.

Principals of the participating schools were mailed the surveys for distribution to the middle leaders in their schools. The number of surveys sent to each school was determined by the number of middle leadership positions within the individual schools; typically this was between 12 and 20 middle leaders. Prior to the distribution of surveys, contact was made with the Principal or relevant staff member at each school in order to clarify the specific middle leadership positions that existed in the school. This ensured that the surveys were distributed to the correct personnel. Written instructions were also included with the surveys, to assist with the distribution of surveys amongst staff members. Schools were requested to distribute surveys to all staff members who held a middle leadership position within their school. Individual middle leaders willing to participate in the study then completed the surveys and individually returned their completed survey by reply-paid mail. Participants were asked to note down the name of their middle leadership position, their gender, the number of years in their current middle leadership position, and their total years of experience in middle leadership. The overall administration of surveys was completed over a six month time period, involving several cycles of written requests to participating schools, follow-up telephone contact, collating and mailing out of surveys and the ongoing organising and recording of data.

Data analysis

The Rasch measurement model was used to statistically analyse the survey data. The Rasch measurement model is a probabilistic model that “...expresses the probabilistic expectations of item and person performance on the construct held to underlie the observed behaviours” (Bond & Fox, 2001, p. 234). The Rasch model focuses on two parameters, item difficulty and person ability or affirmativeness. A person’s level of affirmativeness refers to how easily a respondent is able to endorse an item as being reflective of their own attitude. Bond and Fox (2001) argue that it is inadequate to treat raw scores as direct measures of a person’s ability or level of affirmativeness. Thus, Rasch converts the raw scores from a test or survey instrument to plot calibrated item and person location scores along the same scale, using logits as the

common unit of measurement. Bond and Fox (2001, p. 29) explain that “the logit scale is an interval scale in which the unit intervals between the locations of the person-item map have a consistent value or meaning”. To further clarify this, the item location score indicates the relative level of difficulty of a test or, in this case, survey item. On the other hand, the person location score, also measured in logits, indicates a respondent’s ability level or, as is more appropriate for this research, their degree of affirmativeness.

Cavanagh and Romanoski (2006) explain that when the Rasch Rating Scale Model is used:

The ordinality of response scale data for an individual item is tested in relation to the person ability and item difficulty parameters. This requires estimation of the ‘thresholds’ between adjacent response categories. A threshold is the person location level (logit) at which the probabilities of persons choosing two adjacent response categories are equal (p. 277).

For items to fit the model, the thresholds need to be correctly ordered, indicating that the response categories were used in a consistent and logical manner by the respondents. That is, if the item is functioning correctly, respondents (middle leaders) with a lower ability/level of affirmation, as indicated by their person location score, should logically be expected to select a less affirmative response option (disagree or strongly disagree). Conversely, more affirmative respondents should have a higher probability of selecting a more affirmative response category for an item (agree or strongly agree) if the item fits the model well.

The first step was for the data for each of the five facets to be analysed separately using the computer program RUMM 2030 (Rasch Unidimensional Measurement Models, RUMMLab, 2007). Bond and Fox (2001, p. 173) explain that “in Rasch measurement, we use fit statistics to help us detect the discrepancies between the Rasch model prescriptions and the data we have collected in practice”. RUMM 2030 generated several statistical outputs for each of the five data sets, including:

1. Category probability curve
2. Threshold map

3. Item characteristics curve
4. Individual item fit statistics
5. Summary of test-of fit statistics
6. Person-item threshold distribution
7. Differential item functioning
8. Analysis of variance

Each of these outputs functioned as a test of whether the data fitted the Rasch measurement model and thus provided a reliable measure of the underpinning construct. Bond and Fox (2001, pp. 192-193) explain that “Rasch measurement works hand in hand with the investigator to determine the extent to which the data actually measure the construct under examination”. The fit statistics and relevant outputs for each of the five facets were interpreted to determine how well the data for each facet fitted the Rasch model. According to Bond and Fox (2001), in order for the data to fit the model, it was necessary for the constructs to be unidimensional, that is, for each scale to measure a single attribute. Additionally, it is necessary for the items to have been well targeted, that is, for the range of item difficulties to match the range of respondents’ ability/affirmativeness. Further, the respondents needed to have had a consistent understanding of the difficulty of the items and should have used the four response categories in a logical, consistent manner. For each item, the observed scores for class intervals of respondents with similar overall scores need to closely fit the expected values as predicted by the Rasch model, reflecting a low fit residual for each item (Bond & Fox, 2001). The various RUMM 2030 outputs provided evidence of these data-fit requirements, and are explained fully in Chapter Six. Following the separate analyses of the survey data for each facet, a combined analysis of the 36 items was conducted using the same method as for the single analyses. The data-to-model fit for the combined analysis was not as strong as for the individual analysis of facets, due to the presence of multi-dimensionality within the construct. The combined analysis of items was useful in that it allowed for an overall comparison of item and facet difficulties across all items on the survey instrument, but it was not intended to be used in isolation from the single analyses.

Reliability and validity

Issues of reliability and validity were of central importance to the research study. Significant time and attention was paid to developing effective qualitative and quantitative instruments and necessary processes were followed to make sure accurate inferences were drawn from the data collected. Validity is defined as “...the appropriateness, meaningfulness, correctness, and usefulness of the inferences a researcher makes” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 158). Reliability, on the other hand, refers to the consistency of results and the ability to replicate scores when administering the instrument at multiple times (Creswell, 2005). In order for the findings of a study to be considered valid the study and research instruments need to be well-designed, the participants should have a clear understanding of the questions posed to them and the information drawn from the data should be meaningful and applicable to the purposes of the study (Creswell, 2005). For reliability to be attained, the questions or items on the instrument need to be clear and unambiguous, the procedures of data collection and testing should be consistent and the conditions and procedures should allow the participants to fully engage with the research and have a clear understanding of what is expected of them (Creswell, 2005).

As previously mentioned, the use of a mixed-methods research model was an important feature in developing a valid and reliable research study. A mixed methods research design allows for the triangulation of data. Triangulation means that “...investigators could improve their inquiries by collecting and converging (or integrating) different kinds of data bearing on the same phenomenon”, and by doing so, combine the strengths of both research methods (Creswell, 2005, p. 511). In this case, both qualitative and quantitative data were combined to offer a detailed exploration of middle leadership positions. Furthermore, the sequential design of the study allowed the findings of the qualitative phase to partially inform the quantitative phase. The results from the literature review, document analysis and interviews with school leaders provided some of the conceptual basis for the quantitative process that followed. This process improved the comprehensiveness and applicability of the instrument items, thus improving validity. The qualitative–quantitative sequence also worked to strengthen the validity of the research, in that the quantitative data from

the second phase helped to confirm the qualitative findings from the first phase, further improving the overall validity of the study (Creswell, 2005).

During the initial qualitative phase, issues of reliability and validity were particularly vital, as the key purpose of this stage of the research was to provide an accurate, useful and comprehensive framework for the rest of the study. Sampling was an important factor in ensuring the validity and reliability of the data and findings. Care was taken to ensure that different schools types and demographics were represented as a part of the sample for the document analysis and interviews. The use of purposive sampling of school leaders for the interviews also ensured the views of different types of middle leaders (pastoral, subject or program based) and senior leaders were included in the research. The process of content analysis was applied to both the document and interview data. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2003), one of the disadvantages of using content analysis is in ensuring and proving validity. The meaning of categories applied for coding can be questioned and the coding of latent content, that is, the underlying meanings, can diminish the reliability of the findings (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Therefore it is necessary to provide evidence of the validity and reliability of data and inferences, through means such as content-related evidence, that is, “the degree to which an instrument logically appears to measure an intended variable” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. G2). The results from the document analysis of position descriptions could be compared and cross-checked between schools, as well as between different middle leadership positions within the same school. Where possible an informal meeting with the school principal was also conducted prior to analysis, in order to clarify the documents and the specific organisational context of the school. This process helped to avoid the misinterpretation of the documents collected. Furthermore, the categories developed for coding the data were informed by the review of literature conducted prior to the content analysis.

In the case of the interview schedules developed, content validity was also achieved by first conducting a thorough review of the literature relating to middle leadership positions. This provided a conceptual framework, which then informed the interview schedules. Several drafts of the interview schedules were completed and a practice interview was conducted with the aim of improving the clarity of the interview questions, and thus strengthening the validity and reliability of the final instrument.

Additionally, the selection of a semi-structured interview schedule allowed for the comparison and cross-checking of responses between the participants, once again improving the validity and reliability of the interview data and inferences drawn from the data.

In addition to qualitative research methods used, the application of a quantitative method was essential to improving the validity of the research design. A quantitative approach allowed data to be collected from a larger sample, thus widening the scope of the study. The Rasch model has strict requirements to determine whether data fits the model. As previously mentioned, the data for each of the five facets were analysed using the computer program RUMM 2030. RUMM 2030 runs a series of tests on the data to determine how well the data fit the model, the precision of the measurement scale and the reliability of the estimates produced (Bond & Fox, 2001). The data test-of-fit statistics generate by RUMM 2030 for the analysis of single facets, show that there was a good fit of the data to the Rasch measurement model for all of the five facets. This indicates that the instrument functions as a valid and reliable measure of middle leaders' role perceptions. As mentioned, the conjoint analysis of the 36 items had a weaker data-to-model fit, due to the presence of multidimensionality. Thus a reliance on these statistics alone, without considering the results of the single analysis of facets, should be done with caution and awareness of validity and reliability concerns.

Ethics

Due consideration and sensitivity was applied in addressing the ethical issues involved in this research, in accordance with the principles and guidelines for the ethical conduct of research as outlined in the *NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007). The confidentiality of all individual participants and groups involved in the study was carefully maintained. The individuals and schools involved in the research are referred to here by a pseudonym in order to protect their privacy and confidentiality. In addition to this, all identifying description has been omitted. As required in the *NHMRC National Statement* (2007), informed consent to participate in the research project was given voluntarily by the

schools and individuals. All participants in this research could refuse to participate in, or were at liberty to withdraw from the research at any time without prejudice or negative consequence. Data obtained from the research will be held securely by Curtin University for the duration of five years.

Summary

This chapter has detailed the mixed research method applied in this study. Following an extensive review of literature, an initial qualitative phase of data collection and analysis was undertaken. The qualitative phase involved a document analysis of position descriptions relating to middle leadership positions in secondary schools, as well as a series of semi-structured interviews with three senior leaders and nine middle leaders. A quantitative phase followed with the design and administration of a survey instrument and an analysis of the survey data applying the Rasch measurement model. The research methods used in this study were designed and conducted with consideration given to ethical, reliability and validity concerns. The following chapter presents the results of the document analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS RESULTS

Overview

This chapter presents the findings from the first phase of data collection which involved the analysis of documentation relating to secondary school middle leadership positions. The documents, collected from a sample of ten Western Australian secondary schools, included school-designed position descriptions detailing the roles and key responsibilities of various middle leadership positions. Where available, documents outlining the organisational structure of participating schools, in either diagrammatic or descriptive form, were also collected. The purpose of the document analysis was to develop a clear understanding of the organisational functions and roles of middle leaders. This analysis examined the common functions of all middle leaders whether they oversee a subject, or a pastoral care team or specialist department. Where a responsibility is specific to a particular type of middle leadership position, such as a subject Head of Department, this has been indicated. Many of the roles and expectations of middle leaders as outlined in this chapter were common to multiple schools and these have been outlined generally. Nine organisational functions of middle leadership positions emerged from the analysis of content. These are to: coordinate the educational program; manage the operations of the area; comply with accountability requirements; support student learning; work collaboratively and promote effective communication; build school community and culture; contribute to whole-school planning and change management; promote and model professional excellence; and support and encourage staff. This chapter outlines the specific responsibilities and duties associated with each of the nine functions. Within this chapter, the school from which an item of information or quotation is drawn is referenced by a pseudonym in parentheses.

Function one: Coordinate the educational program

Clearly, one of the central roles of a middle leader is to oversee the development and implementation of the educational program for which they are responsible. Middle leaders work with the teaching and support staff in their program area to coordinate the development of an effective educational program, whether for a subject, or a pastoral or specialist program. Middle leaders facilitate the design, implementation and subsequent review of their programs, as well as maintaining accurate records of student achievement and participation. Subject-based middle leaders are also responsible for the coordination of student assessment, including the development of relevant procedures and policies for their learning area.

Design, implement and review educational programs

Instructional programming is a key responsibility of all middle leaders. Middle leaders are responsible for coordinating their department's educational program. This may involve coordinating the development and implementation of specific curriculum programs, or a range of other whole-school or specialist programs dependent on the middle leader's role within the school setting. Middle leaders are accountable for all stages of educational programming, from the planning, design and implementation, through to the subsequent review and modification phases. During the planning and design stages of educational programming, it is the middle leader's responsibility to supervise the process, applying their expert knowledge to create an effective program. They oversee the design and implementation of pedagogically effective programs (School F). In doing so, middle leaders are expected to promote a collaborative approach to the design and development of learning programs, by consulting and involving individual members of the program staff (School B). Middle leaders may also be required to manage any specialised or individualised educational programs offered by their department. For example, middle leaders who head subject departments might coordinate the provision of enrichment or modified learning programs to cater for the individual learning needs of students (School D). Middle leaders who are responsible for coordinating whole-school educational programs often work with staff members outside of their department. In order to enrich their educational program, middle leaders plan and

coordinate special learning activities, such as competitions, excursions and assemblies (School B and School F). Overall, a middle level leader is accountable for the design and coordination of all educational programs in their area of responsibility (School G). They must ensure that the programs are being delivered correctly and to a high standard. The documentation from School B outlines this as a key accountability requirement of the position, stating that the middle leader needs “to ensure the subject program is being properly followed by each learning area member”. Furthermore, a requirement of the position is to monitor the implementation of educational programs, looking for opportunities to improve the content or delivery of the programs (School F). In the final stages of the educational programming cycle, middle leaders review and modify the learning programs where necessary. As a whole, educational planning is a key responsibility of the middle leadership position, to “maintain ongoing and effective curriculum review, planning and implementation in his/her subject area...” (School F).

Coordinate the administration of student assessment

Following on from the programming requirements of the middle leader is the associated responsibility of coordinating student assessment. This duty is, of course, largely relevant to those middle leaders who head a subject area. Within this context, one of the specific functions of the middle leadership position is the “control of subject evaluation and recording policy” (School G). It is a responsibility of subject-based middle leaders to coordinate student assessment within their department by preparing and providing assessment schedules to the appropriate teaching staff (School F). Middle leaders are also expected to ensure that the department’s student assessment policies and procedures are understood by staff, students and parents (School B). In undertaking this function, middle leaders might delegate tasks, such as the setting and marking of assessments, to colleagues (School B). Furthermore, middle leaders ensure that high standards of student assessment are maintained within their area of responsibility (School F). They must guarantee the rigour of student assessment by making sure that the assessment program is valid and comprehensive (School B). Additionally, middle leaders are required to monitor the

reliability of assessments by ensuring consistency, fairness and comparability in course assessment standards across their department.

Maintain records

Middle leaders have to manage student records. The documentation from School G states that a specific function of the middle leadership position is to control the recording policy of the learning area. Middle leaders need to ensure that up-to-date, accurate records of student achievement and participation are maintained. It is the middle leader's responsibility, for example, to guarantee that the records of student assessment are clear and readily accessible (School F). Middle leaders are expected to undertake specific duties to ensure that records of student achievement and involvement are accurately and comprehensively maintained. Middle leaders who are responsible for subject departments may be required to coordinate the reporting of student assessment data to the state curriculum organisation in consultation with the school's senior leaders (School H). In doing so they are expected to check and confirm the grades achieved by students in their specific area (School B), as well as prepare and submit all necessary documentation (School F).

Function two: Manage the operations of the area

A large part of a middle leader's work is administrative. Middle leaders are required to carry out the necessary duties required for the effective operation of their department. This involves managing the resources, managing the program budget, coordinating the work of the teaching and non-teaching staff working in their department and developing functional systems and processes for the smooth running of their area of responsibility.

Assist with the selection of staff

One of a middle leader's key responsibilities is to inform the senior leaders of the staffing requirements within their area of responsibility. Firstly, identifying the

specific staffing requirements within their department, such as the need for additional teaching, specialist or ancillary staff. Then reporting these needs to the school's Principal (School F) or appropriate senior leader. Having informed the senior leadership team of staffing needs, middle leaders work with senior leaders to "assist in the selection...of new staff members" (School B). This may involve the middle leader helping with the assessment of applicants (School H). Middle leaders may also be requested by their school's senior leaders to assist with staff allocation and time-tabling processes (Schools B, C and D). As such, middle leaders are expected to regularly review the current teaching allocations of their staff. Having done so, they advise the Principal of any required or requested changes to the current staff allocations (School E). Likewise, they are required to advise the principal as to the most effective deployment of staff in their area of responsibility (Schools E and H). On a day-to-day basis middle leaders liaise with the senior leaders to organise appropriate cover for the classes and duties of absent staff (School F).

Coordinate and manage the work of staff

Middle leaders manage the daily operational work of their staff members. Middle leaders manage the human resource requirements of their program and are responsible for the "...professional management of staff who work in the [department]" (School I). Middle leaders must consider how to best delegate specific roles and duties to individual staff members (School E). Middle leaders also oversee the work of teachers under their leadership, ensuring that they are on track to meet deadlines, such as due dates for reporting (School F). In coordinating the work of their program staff, middle leaders additionally ensure provision of schedules, programs and other relevant documentation which enable day-to-day operations such as teaching.

Manage resources

In addition to managing the work of staff in the department, middle leaders also need to manage the team's physical and financial resources. Middle leaders are responsible for "the effective management of facilities and equipment allocated to

the learning area” (School I). This includes the purchasing, cataloguing, storage and maintenance of all resources. Whilst primarily being a responsibility of the middle leader, the management of faculty resources may be undertaken with the assistance of colleagues (School E). Prior to the acquisition or use of new resources the middle leader may implement a consultative process (School C and School D). In doing so, the middle leader might consult, for instance, with the school librarian, in order to identify resources which might be appropriate for inclusion in the school’s library catalogue (School B). Alternatively, consultation with teachers and middle leaders from other departments may take place, to ensure the most effective use of shared resources (School B).

For all new and existing educational resources and equipment, a middle leader maintains an accurate inventory (School H). Over time, resources and equipment need to be monitored by the middle leader for maintenance or the need for possible replacement. It is a further duty of the middle leader “to be responsible for the use and up-keep of rooms allocated to his/her learning area” (School B). Another key responsibility is managing the financial resources of the department. In managing the financial resources of their area of responsibility, the middle leader will prepare the department’s budget. Following approval, the middle leader manages expenditure and ensures that financial records are accurately maintained (School H).

Establish and manage systems and policies

Middle leaders work to develop and implement systems and policies for the efficient operation of their department. For example, subject-based middle leaders are expected to develop and monitor curriculum-related policy. Such policies may include literacy or numeracy policies, as well as policies for assessment or homework. These policies may be specific to their area of responsibility (School E) or they may be developed in conjunction with other areas, so as to maintain school-wide consistency (School B). More broadly, middle leaders might also be required to explicitly define the goals and philosophy of their department in a central policy statement (School H). Importantly, middle leaders need to ensure that staff members are well informed of the policies and operation systems in place within in their department. This includes ensuring that teaching and ancillary staff who are new to

the department have undergone an adequate induction process (School H). Importantly, middle leaders are also expected to disseminate and monitor the implementation of relevant whole-school policies and procedures.

Provide administrative support to senior leaders

In addition to the prescribed organisational functions outlined above, middle leaders may also be required to provide the school's senior leaders with general administrative support when it is requested (School C and School D). Additionally, middle leaders must be prepared to undertake other duties or responsibilities as requested by the Principal or senior leaders (School I).

Function three: Compliance with accountability requirements

Another important function of middle leadership positions is the preparation of key reports and documents required for school review processes. Middle leaders are accountable to the senior leaders for the work and operation of their department. Therefore, they are usually accountable for preparing an annual report and providing financial documents for auditing. Middle leaders are also responsible for monitoring and evaluating the work of staff working in their area, and they will often assist in formally appraising the performance of staff (performance management). These roles are detailed in turn in the following sections.

Provide senior leaders with reports and records

Middle leaders prepare and provide documentation and information relevant to the management of the school, to the school's senior leaders. Middle leaders need to prepare formal reports and document the activities and expenditure of their departments. They may also be required to submit records of student achievement and participation in their area of responsibility when requested. The preparation of a program area's financial records is also the responsibility of its leader. As mentioned, middle leaders are required to manage the financial budget within their

area of responsibility. In addition to the provision of budgetary documents, they are required to comply with the specific financial accountability measures in place at their school. A middle leader is expected to ensure that financial records are available on request and presented to the appropriate senior leader in accordance with the school's requirements (School B and School F). Aside from formally documented reports and records, they are also required to provide their school's senior leaders with any other requested information pertaining to their department. This might, for instance, involve informing the Principal of changes to text book selections (School B) or seeking approval for proposed resource acquisitions.

Assist senior leaders with staff appraisal processes

In order to make certain that appropriate professional standards are being maintained throughout the school, middle leaders are required to assist the school's senior leaders with formal staff appraisal processes. The middle leadership position "carries responsibilities for the performance management of staff using the formal processes developed at the College..." (School A). Middle leaders are required to advise the Principal on staff performance matters that arise with their departments. It may be necessary for a middle leader to liaise with the Principal regarding the professional performance of program staff (School F). Those in middle leadership positions are responsible for informing the Principal about program staff members who may exhibit highly effective teaching practices and strong professional performance. A middle leader may also be required to help select staff members for promotional positions within their department or the school (School H).

Function four: Support student learning

A crucial function of middle leaders is their direct role in supporting student learning. The document analysis revealed that middle leaders are expected to work collaboratively with students and parents in order to foster student growth and learning. They are required to closely monitor student achievement and participation in the program, as well as to oversee the behaviour and welfare of students. In a

distributed leadership model, middle leaders are also seen to play a central role in promoting student leadership capacity within the school.

Collaborate and communicate with parents and students

It is expected that much of a middle leader's daily communication will be with the students and the parents of students. The documents from School F specify that the frequency of a middle leader's communication with individual parents and students should be such that they are able to "establish and maintain effective contact" (School F). Middle leaders are often the "first line of parent contact, after the classroom teacher" (School G). Middle leaders also schedule meetings with parents (School B). Pastoral-based middle leaders could, for example, organise and conduct year group or pastoral group meetings for students (School B). Middle leaders may also be responsible for organising and conducting parent information sessions (School B).

A middle leader needs to "monitor and where necessary, counsel and supervise students with academic requests and/or problems within the learning area" (School F). A middle leader is expected to provide specialised educational advice to students within their area of responsibility (School E). This may be in the form of general advice relating to successful study habits and techniques. A middle leader may need to provide more specific information and advice to students, to assist them with decisions related to their study, such as course selection. Once students have confirmed their preferred course or class selections, the middle leader may be required to approve these selections, to ensure students have selected a course that best suits their abilities and interests (School B).

Monitor and report student achievement and participation

In supporting student learning, middle leaders review student assessment results in order to monitor student achievement (School D). Monitoring student achievement and participation allows middle leaders to identify students in their area of responsibility who appear to be at educational risk. They are subsequently able to

refer such students to appropriate support staff for further assistance (School G). Middle leaders are responsible for organising additional educational initiatives, to assist students in their program who may need extra support in achieving their educational goals. Such initiatives may include organising extra tuition for selected students who have been identified as needing educational support or assistance. Middle leaders facilitate the reporting of student achievement and participation, to parents and the school's senior leaders. This includes the provision of feedback to students and their parents (School E) in all forms, in particular formal term or semester reports. Regardless of the form of reporting, middle leaders are responsible for ensuring a high standard of reporting and feedback is maintained (School F).

Oversee the welfare of students

A key function of middle leaders is to oversee the daily wellbeing of students. Specifically, a middle leader must “lead and manage the pastoral, behavioural and welfare needs of students in [their specialist area]” (School D). A middle leader has a responsibility to ensure the overall wellbeing of students within their specialist area, as well as their academic progress (School I). In overseeing student welfare needs, it is the duty of a middle leader to support and manage both the provision of pastoral care and the management of student behaviour within their department (Schools C and D). In ensuring that the needs of all students are being addressed, middle leaders are expected to ensure that all new students are provided with appropriate support and orientation (School H).

Development of student leadership

Middle leaders are expected to “encourage, develop and support student leadership at all levels” (School F). This duty is particularly relevant for middle leaders responsible for pastoral programs. This is likely to include those middle leaders who hold such positions as Heads of House or Year Level Coordinators. In this setting, middle leaders would be required to encourage students of all years to assume roles of responsibility and leadership within the program or the school as a whole. Specifically, the middle leader may “coordinate the selection of student

representatives and oversee the operations of the year level student council” (School B).

Function five: Promote effective communication and collaboration

As outlined in the review of literature, middle leaders are central to organisational communication, through the bridging role they play between senior leaders and teaching or non-teaching staff. This function was evident in the position descriptions analysed for this study. Middle leaders were expected to work collaboratively with the school’s senior leaders, attending leadership meetings with senior leaders and other middle leaders. Furthermore, middle leaders promote a collaborative work culture amongst staff in their program area.

School leadership collaboration

It is necessary for a school’s middle leaders and senior leaders to establish and maintain a collaborative working relationship, as both groups share the common purpose of and responsibility for providing quality educational leadership for their school community. This requires middle leaders to work with senior leaders and be involved in participative decision-making processes (School E). A key area in which a school’s middle and senior leaders should collaborate as a unified force is in the development, articulation and communication of their school’s vision, goals and objectives (School C and School D). Thus, middle leaders are required to regularly liaise with members of their school’s senior leadership team (School C and School D), in order to ensure that a common focus and shared purpose is maintained.

Attend school leadership meetings

In order to develop a collaborative working environment, middle leaders attend scheduled school meetings with members of their school’s senior leaders. Such meetings often involve regular gatherings of a school’s middle leaders, with representatives from the school’s senior leaders. The documentation from School F,

for example, states that it is a key expectation of the middle leadership position to attend all meetings with other middle leaders. Likewise, middle leaders might be required to attend leadership meetings on a consistent basis, in order to represent the views and concerns of their department. The attendance of middle leaders at leadership meetings permits them to engage in open, regular dialogue with senior staff members at their school. This ensures that senior leaders are kept informed about issues of concern to middle leaders and the staff under their leadership. Additionally, it provides the opportunity for the members of the senior leadership team to disseminate relevant information to the school's middle leaders. This information can in turn be communicated to the staff within the middle leaders' program areas.

Convene regular meetings with program staff

In addition to attending school leadership meetings, middle leaders are expected to schedule and run similar meetings within their individual departments. They are required to liaise closely with the members of staff working in their areas of responsibility. This is achieved by conducting "... regular meetings of staff to discuss matters of importance to the faculty" (School F), to ensure that middle leaders are attuned to the ideas, opinions and concerns of the program staff. Additionally, having attended school leadership meetings as a representative of their team, a middle leader is expected to regularly report back to the program staff, informing them of all relevant information (School B). The frequency of such meetings might, in some schools, be determined by the individual middle leader or else it may be explicitly stipulated by a school's senior leaders. The documents from School G, for instance, state that department meetings should occur every week. It is also an important function of middle leaders to build a supportive and collaborative environment within their departments. A middle leader is responsible for encouraging staff members to work as a team (School B and School E), thus creating a culture of collaboration. By promoting team work among staff members, the middle leader is able to foster a greater sense of cohesion within the program area. This assists in developing a consensus about the approaches and strategies the department should undertake in meeting the needs of its students (School B).

Build collaborative working relationships

An individual middle leader is expected to work in close cooperation with other middle leaders within the school organisation. A school's middle leaders may be required to meet on a regular basis (School F), in order to discuss matters that are of general concern. This, for example, might involve their collaboration for the development of standardised academic policies (School B), with middle leaders working together to ensure that policies and standards are consistently applied across program areas.

Function six: Build school community and culture

Outside of their individual departments or program areas, middle leaders can play a role in developing school community and fostering school values and ethos. By promoting a sense of shared purpose and vision within the wider school community, this function indicates how middle leaders are encouraged to extend their influence beyond their specific area of responsibility.

Promote the school's vision

A central duty of the middle leader is to promote the school's ethos and vision within the school community (School C, School D and School G). A middle leader may be expected to personally demonstrate the school's values and ethos within the community, striving to embody the values and purpose of the school (School B). Middle leaders also build the level of community spirit and cooperation within their departments. This goes beyond encouraging staff members to work collaboratively, aiming to develop a broader sense of community (School F). The middle leader is expected to promote a positive culture among the staff and students (School H). This might involve overseeing special team-building activities (School H), or at a fundamental level, personally knowing and acknowledging the students in their area (School B). The development of community spirit should also extend outwards to include parents. For example, inviting parents to participate in events or activities being organised by the department (School H). Additionally, middle leaders are

often expected to help senior leaders promote the achievements of the school, and more specifically of their department, within the wider community (School D and School E). A middle leader may be required to assist with whole-school promotional activities by assisting with school tours, open days (School F) or special whole-school events.

Develop external links

Middle leaders may be required to foster the establishment of inter-disciplinary links, to enhance student learning. It is the middle leader's responsibility as an educational leader to design and promote cross-curricular initiatives with other departments (School E). Middle leaders will work to support the development of cross-curricular links, nurturing these connections within their specific areas of responsibility (School D). A similar function of the middle leader is to explore educational programs and initiatives outside of the immediate school community, working towards developing connections with community resources and contacts in order to enhance student learning opportunities (School F). Middle leaders may be expected to initiate or maintain contact with organisations and individuals in the wider community who may be able to support or enrich the work of students and staff in their departments.

Function seven: Contribute to whole-school planning and change management

Along with their role in promoting a sense of school community and culture, middle leaders fulfil a further function at the whole-school level by participating in school planning. Middle leaders play a part in participative decision-making, working with the senior leadership team to influence the future direction of the school. Middle leaders are also important in managing change in the school and more specifically in their program, in that they oversee the integration and implementation of school policies at a classroom level.

Contribute to whole-school planning and development

There is a strong expectation that a school's middle leaders will play a significant role in assisting senior leaders with whole-school planning and development (School C and School D). Thus, a middle leader is expected to contribute to whole-school planning and development through participative decision-making. An example of a middle leader's contribution to whole-school planning could include providing input to school committees and decision-making groups (School E). Middle leaders are expected to be involved in all stages of the whole-school planning and development process, including defining, implementing and reviewing school plans, programs and policies (School E). As well as participating in whole-school decision-making processes, middle leaders are required to manage the process of change effectively within their program (School C, School D and School G).

Function eight: Promote and model professional excellence

Middle leaders also function as professional role models for their peers and are expected to promote exemplary teaching skills and professional qualities. Middle leaders are expected to keep up-to-date with educational developments and professional knowledge, so that they are able to pass these skills and understandings on to their program staff.

Keep up-to-date with educational developments

The middle leader is considered to be an educational expert within their area of responsibility. It is important for middle leaders to continually up-date their professional knowledge so that they are able to provide expert advice for their program area (School C). This requires middle leaders to be informed about recent educational innovations and changes, and in turn they must ensure that their departments are kept up-to-date (School F). For those who head an academically focused department, this may include, keeping abreast of curriculum and course changes (School B). Middle leaders are encouraged to actively represent their school and departments within the wider professional community. They are therefore

expected to seek membership of applicable professional associations (School B). In order to stay abreast of all relevant educational reforms and initiatives, middle leaders are also expected to attend educational conferences relevant to their program area (School F).

Model exemplary classroom practice

Most middle leaders have a significant teaching role. Thus, as an instructional leader, they model exemplary teaching practices for program staff (School C and School D). A middle leader is expected to be committed to, “the demonstration and promotion of excellence and inspiration in teaching” (School E). In order to best demonstrate their instructional expertise, middle leaders will often teach across a range of classes, subjects and year levels.

Middle leaders are encouraged to look for opportunities to improve the performance of their program area. In fulfilling this expectation, middle leaders promote educational innovations or initiatives that serve to enhance the achievement of educational outcomes within their departments (School E). They also guide the development of more effective and innovative educational programs (School D). This might require middle leaders to provide leadership and support for program staff who are “...engaged in the planning and delivery of cross-curriculum, integrated programs and the use of learning technologies” (School A). Middle leaders also have a key responsibility to “enhance and monitor the learning environment for students” (School I). This requires middle leaders to identify opportunities to improve classroom practices (School C). Specifically, this may include supporting the integration of learning technologies into the classroom. As educational leaders, middle leaders are expected to support the use of learning technologies in their area of responsibility, helping to apply technology to enhance student learning (School D).

Function nine: Support and encourage staff

Finally, middle leaders support and mentor their teaching colleagues, taking the time to discuss concerns and offer professional advice. They also support and induct new staff, ensuring that necessary documents and information are disseminated to staff who are beginning at the school. Importantly, middle leaders offer professional learning opportunities for staff working in their department, in order to encourage professional development and thereby improve the educational outcomes of students in their program.

Support and mentor staff

Middle leaders are responsible for providing professional support to the teachers and ancillary staff working within their program area (School I). At the most fundamental level, this requires middle leaders to be available to discuss with their staff any professional concerns and work with staff members to develop strategies or solutions to assist with these problems (School B). Whilst middle leaders are required to support all of the program staff members, they should be aware of individuals who, due to varying circumstances, may be in need of more directed or extensive support. This might involve a middle leader providing individualised counsel to staff members who are undergoing performance appraisal (School F). Recently appointed staff members may also require additional support (School B and School F). Middle leaders are expected to mentor new staff (School E), advising these teachers on the specific systems, policies and processes used in the department and the school (School G). Middle leaders are required to provide a high level of support and assistance to staff who are recent graduates and new to the education profession (School B). The middle leader will provide additional assistance, direction and information for the new staff member (School H). As a whole, teaching and non-teaching staff within a department should feel encouraged and supported by their middle leader (School F).

Monitor the performance of staff

As a part of their instructional leadership role, middle leaders must guide the professional development of staff working in their department. Middle leaders are expected to oversee the performance of staff within their program (School C), working to continually improve the standard of professional practice within their area of responsibility. In particular, middle leaders are expected to focus on improving teaching standards within their departments (School H). Middle leaders can promote the improvement of professional standards within their specialist area by encouraging the staff to undertake reflective practice strategies. School E, for example, states that in order to encourage staff development, middle leaders could promote self and peer appraisal (School E). A middle leader can also improve professional standards within their area of responsibility by organising and promoting professional growth and learning opportunities for all staff members working in the program area (School F). Middle leaders must ensure that their colleagues have regular opportunities to undertake professional learning and performance appraisal (School A). Additionally, middle leaders may be expected to deliver professional development sessions for the staff (School H).

Encourage staff to realise their professional potential

Middle leaders work to inspire, encourage and support their staff to realise their full potential as professional educators. Middle leaders provide individualised mentoring and support for their staff, whilst working towards fostering a culture of collaboration and collegiality within their department. In carrying out their leadership responsibilities, middle leaders work to encourage the professional growth of staff. The documentation from School B states that it is a middle leader's responsibility to "...provide inspiration, expertise and direction and be of personal assistance in helping his/her staff to develop their full potential as teachers". In doing so, it is expected that middle leaders present themselves as role models for professional development. Thus, middle leaders are required to lead by example, demonstrating a personal commitment to their own professional growth and learning.

Summary

As outlined in the review of literature, middle leadership is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon. This can be seen in the diversity and multiplicity of duties and responsibilities that comprise a middle leader's work. The role is further complicated by the number of people and groups with whom they interact. The nature of middle leadership is that its centrality in a school's organisational structure places these individuals in a position which requires them to function in a number of different contexts. These varying contexts add a further layer of complexity to the nine functions outlined in this chapter, as middle leaders negotiate their duties and responsibilities across a range of varying perspectives, priorities and values. Overall, middle leaders function to produce and coordinate successful educational programs, support the senior leaders in the effective running of the school and encourage professional excellence, in order to improve the educational outcomes of students within their department and achieve the broader school goals and objectives. The following chapter presents the results from the interviews with middle and senior leaders.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERVIEW RESULTS

Overview

This chapter presents the results from the semi-structured interviews conducted with nine middle leaders and three senior leaders across three Western Australian secondary schools. During the interviews, middle leaders were asked a series of 26 questions, which focused on determining: how middle leaders conceptualised their position; the accountability requirements of the position; the degree to which middle leaders are involved in and influence whole-school development; the expectations middle leaders had of the position; the factors which influence a middle leader's work; and the professional development needs of middle leaders. Senior leaders were asked a similar sequence of questions relating to middle leadership, with the purpose of cross-analysing the perspectives and ideas that middle leaders and senior leaders held about the position. Senior Leader One and Middle Leaders One, Four and Five were all educational leaders at the same school. Senior Leader Two and Middle Leaders Two, Six and Eight were interviewed from a second sample school. Senior Leader Three and Middle Leaders Three, Seven and Nine were from a third sample school. This chapter outlines the findings of the interviews and explores issues relating to middle leadership, including: the nature of the role; the problems and limitations associated with the position; the organisational functions, skills and training requirements; the professional support provided; and the middle leaders' personal goals and experiences.

1. The nature of the role

This section examines the complex nature of middle leadership positions in education by considering the dual function of middle leaders as both teachers and leaders, as well as the dynamic nature of middle leadership.

The dual nature of middle leadership

One of the definitive features of middle leadership is the dual nature of the position. That is, middle leaders are typically responsible for both teaching and leading. Middle Leader Three explained that, “we [subject-based middle leaders] run the department, so we teach and administer and that’s a key factor”. Aside from their leadership role, most middle leaders will typically have a teaching allocation that is one or two classes less than a full-time teacher. The duties and expectations of middle leadership positions are therefore carried out along with a significant teaching role. This double function places middle leaders in a critical position within a school’s organisational structure. Middle leaders are in a position which requires them to liaise between their school’s teachers and leaders. Middle Leader Three explained that “middle [leadership] is crucial because it is the link between the teacher and the administrator.... We have to bring the concerns of the staff to the executive of the school”. Their role as both teacher and leader creates the potential for middle leaders to experience a sense of isolation: “I do feel in some respects that I’m a little bit on my own. Everyone’s always really busy”, Middle Leader Four explained. Yet, at the same time they remain central, influential figures within a school’s organisational structure—an area that is explored later in the chapter.

The dynamic nature of middle leadership

Middle leadership was generally seen as a very dynamic position. The interviewees indicated that alterations had often been made both to their individual roles, and more broadly within their school and the educational system. In particular, the position was increasing in complexity, with heightening of responsibility, accountability, workload and performance expectations. “It’s a more complex world and, as a result, it’s a more complex job. Things aren’t as simple as they used to be”. Middle Leader Seven explained. Several of the interviewees explained that there had been an ongoing redefinition, refinement and restructuring of middle leadership position descriptions. Middle Leader Five, for example, indicated that in her school, some of the coordination duties currently undertaken by the pastoral-based middle leaders would be delegated to the teaching staff in the near future. It was felt that this change would allow the pastoral-based middle leaders to focus their time and efforts

on the central purpose of their position: “It’s going to become more of a pastoral role than an organisational role”. Commonly, middle leaders commented that their individual roles were continually being reshaped and redefined in order to meet the shifting needs of their schools. In describing the nature of their role, Middle Leader Seven explained that “it’s a very loose position. It’s sort of evolved as needed”.

Senior Leader Three explained his school regularly looks at ways to restructure middle leadership, “how might we restructure middle [leadership] to provide a better setting for what we do?” Such modifications were seen as being necessary to meet the shifting demands and needs of a modern school. Middle Leader Nine explained that “there are always modifications and changes taking place because we have got a very dynamic [school]”. Aside from the ongoing redefinition of position responsibilities, two schools involved in the interviews had recently significantly restructured their middle leadership model to pastoral and discipline-based positions that are more clearly delineated. Senior Leader One explained that pastoral-based middle leadership has emerged as a crucial position within their school:

We’ve only had [pastoral-based middle leadership positions] in this school for the last seven or eight years. [Pastoral-based middle leadership is] a role that has evolved from something that people basically [have] got no time to do ... to a very well rounded position of responsibility.

Several factors were seen to have contributed to the dynamic nature of middle leadership positions. Senior Leader Two said that changes in senior leadership often had a flow-on effect for middle leaders. Middle Leader Seven agreed:

The transfer of workload or jobs to middle [leadership] has occurred radically in the education system, because there is so much to be done at that top level as well. We’ve got to have a group there that can do those lower order things, which are very important and must be done.

Middle Leader Three, similarly, observed that “workload issues are being passed down from Principal to Deputies and increasingly they’re being handed down to middle [leadership] to deal with”. The increased impact of technology on the work of middle leaders was another factor seen to be influencing the position. Middle Leader Nine stated that “an increasing influence for us is that of technology. Because we are

working as much as we can to develop better on-line learning programs and use technology to assist kids who have learning difficulties”. Middle Leader Nine also commented that the implementation of new educational initiatives in recent years has had a significant impact on middle leadership responsibilities. A perceived shortage of staff in the teaching profession was also cited as a factor contributing to the dynamic nature of middle leadership: “The brunt of the teacher shortage is falling on middle [leaders] in many schools” (Middle Leader Three). The dynamic nature of middle leadership was seen to have contributed to the heavy demands of the position, resulting in increased and intensified responsibilities and expectations. Senior Leader Three explained that the dynamic nature of middle leadership positions has meant that middle leaders have had to change the way they work, becoming flexible and creative rather than mechanical in their approach to work issues. Senior Leader Three stated that “there certainly was a time when you could have just walked into a faculty and done the business...I think it’s far more dynamic now”.

2. Problems and limitations

Several problems or limitations associated with middle leadership positions were raised. These were: a lack of role clarity; the broad scope of middle leadership roles; the limited formal role authority afforded to some middle leaders; a perceived undervaluing of middle leaders’ work within schools; and the existence of role tension and conflict. Each of these areas are examined in the following section.

Lack of role clarity

A lack of clarity in the definition and scope of middle leadership positions was a concern of middle leaders. Some middle leaders interviewed were happy with the precision of their role description: “There is a clear understanding of what we need to do”, Middle Leader Five explained, and “I know what I need to do”, said Middle Leader Two. However, others felt the need for clearer definition and structure. “It’s got to be more clearly defined”, Middle Leader Four said, and added that “I’d like to

see each role clearly defined and given precedence as a separate entity so that it can then be transferable to other staff, whether I'm here or not".

In particular, some of the middle leaders interviewed stated that a blurring of responsibilities existed between different middle leadership roles; Middle Leader Seven explained that "we've got 16-17 people working up at this [middle leadership] level, and working out who's responsible for what can get a little confusing at times". Senior Leader One commented that "there is no doubt that there is a blurring, with some responsibilities, such as behaviour management, overlapping between middle leadership positions". A lack of clear delineation of the responsibilities and duties required of senior leaders and those required of middle leaders was also noted. It was felt that the increased work demands being placed on senior leaders and teaching staff had resulted in a *sandwiching* of the middle leadership position. Middle Leader Three explained that "[the] jobs that were primarily the role of deputies in past years are now the prerogative of middle [leadership]. Also we have work load issues from the teachers coming up...so [there is a] squeeze in the middle". Middle Leader Seven likewise suggested "I do think there has been a bit of a sandwiching at that middle [leadership] level". This pressure on middle leadership positions was seen to have resulted in increased workloads for middle leaders, a shift in the types of jobs middle leaders are expected to carry out, and an over-reliance on middle leadership within some schools.

Senior Leader One explained that job descriptions help to improve the level of role clarity for middle leaders, saying "we try to make them [middle leadership positions] clear and defined". Similarly, Senior Leader Two felt that the roles of middle leaders were quite defined, yet suggested that middle leaders needed to refer back to their position descriptions for a greater sense of expectations. Whilst each of the senior leaders interviewed believed that middle leadership positions were clear and defined at their specific schools, Senior Leader Three commented that, more broadly in education, "there needs to be more clarification [of middle leaderships duties and expectations]. That will help in the promotion of the position [and] the status of the position...". Although clear, consistent definitions of role description and scope may be desirable for middle leaders, it can be difficult to adequately capture the complexity of middle leadership responsibilities within a written document. "You might write down 'attendance', but what does that require?" Middle Leader Seven

asked. It was also felt that formalised, written position descriptions, while quite clear in outlining core duties and requirements of the role, did not always adequately and fully capture the complexity and implicit expectations of middle leadership. Middle Leader Seven stated, “the breadth of it [the role] is extraordinary. I mean you could write a book on the things that are touched on in this particular job”. Middle Leader Eight also commented, “I could list a million things that I’m expected to do that are not in my job description”.

In some situations a lack of role clarity occurred when middle leadership positions were newly established within schools or where existing positions were being restructured. For some middle leaders, this freedom from prescriptive role descriptions was felt to be to be advantageous, in that middle leaders were able to play a role in developing and defining their own position description. Middle Leader Seven explained:

I think the other advantage I’ve had is that the roles have never really been defined and I’ve been able to define the role myself. So that’s been effective in the sense that I’ve never walked into these roles with ‘you’ve got to do it this way’, which is an advantage. I think I’d find that really hard.

Similarly, Middle Leader Nine said, “I’ve grown with the position”, having had the opportunity to initiate their program and develop it over several years. Commenting on the prescriptive nature of some position descriptions, Senior Leader Three remarked, “You don’t want to dot every ‘I’ and cross every ‘T’...there has to be a degree left open”. Senior Leader Three added that sometimes it’s preferable to leave some position descriptions open, “as long as [middle leaders] have clear expectations of what the ‘non-negotiables’ are and they have clear support and know there’s a level of trust and professionalism”. Thus, whilst clearly defined duties and expectations are important to direct a middle leader’s work, some flexibility and capacity for individualising position descriptions may be important, in order to allow middle leaders to have increased ownership and control of their work.

Role scope

Relating to the idea of role clarity is the scope of middle leadership positions. A common concern of middle leaders was the sheer quantity of work required by their role. Some middle leaders felt that the scope of the position was too great, with too many duties for middle leaders to complete satisfactorily. Middle Leader Five explained that “starting this job has been a wake-up call because it is a lot more work than you think it is”. Likewise, Middle Leader Six stated, “I think our loads, our expectations are quite high. We have quite demanding roles”. Middle Leader Three, a subject leader, also commented on the scope of their middle leadership position:

The duties are massive because, not only are you in charge of curriculum, you are in charge of the behaviour management of all the students [and] you have a role as Human Resources Manager for six or seven staff directly.

One of the factors thought to be contributing to the heavy workloads of middle leaders is the time-intensive nature of some tasks. Large amounts of paperwork and following up concerns about students were some of the duties middle leaders identified as being particularly time consuming. In relation to their workload, Middle Leader Six, a pastoral-based leader, said “student absenteeism takes a lot of my time too and I don’t think they [the senior leaders] probably realise”. Middle Leader Seven felt that “it seems that more and more there are administrative details that we just have to do in order to be able to manage the program”. Middle Leader Two explained that workload demands vary throughout the year, and “there are times of the year when it is very demanding, particularly during reporting”. Likewise, Middle Leader Seven, a pastoral leader, observed:

You can’t predict your workload, your workload is not consistent...so I think it’s the immediate nature of some things I have to do and the unpredictability of what I have to do. And sometimes you are reactive when...you want to be proactive.

According to the interview participants, other factors contributing to the workload of middle leaders include an over-reliance on middle leaders by senior leaders and teaching staff: “I think sometimes the Deputies do rely on you a little bit and that’s not too bad, but sometimes it gets a little [pressured]”, Middle Leader Seven

explained. Additional issues with the scope of middle leadership roles include the pressure of performing a middle leadership role in addition to a significant teaching load, as well as the expectation that middle leaders will take on extra-curricular duties in addition to their middle leadership role. Middle Leader Three commented:

The middle [leader] has all the administrative roles to do but they still have to teach; that means all the preparation, all the marking. That's why the middle [leaders have] such a work load issue, because they have to do two roles.

Middle Leader Three felt that on the whole, the scope and demands of the middle leadership role were growing: "They [the duties of middle leaders] are increasingly difficult to achieve because of the workload factors and the complexity of the job is increasing all of the time". Similarly, Middle Leader Nine commented, "It's a very demanding role, hugely so. But I do think that, that is just what the job entails these days".

Several of the middle leaders interviewed said that, in order to meet the demands of their roles, there was an expectation that middle leaders would work additional hours outside of school time. Middle Leader Eight stated that, "I think there's a general expectation that you do more than is required because you're in that position [middle leadership]...". Middle Leader Eight commented that, "it might take us a lot of extra time after school, before school or at home but we get the job done". Middle Leader Six reported that their workload also led to the loss of break time during the working day:

Ultimately it takes all of your recess or it takes all of your lunch time... I don't think necessarily the people in higher positions than myself are aware of that and sometimes that is a big ask when you are teaching a whole lot during the day. You effectively lose a break time.

Middle Leader Six also commented, "we [middle leaders] are also expected to participate in lots of extra-curricular things... So we're given these duties that obviously take time outside of school and that's just expected of you". Senior Leader Two agreed that middle leadership roles, particularly subject leadership, are big roles to perform, often with limited time allocation: "...you've got [middle leaders] who

absolutely kill themselves to do a good job, but whose own health or personal circumstances suffer as a result of their job”.

Overall, middle leaders commented that the scope of their role was broad and the demands of the position seemed to be increasing, however, most agreed that the expectations of the role were ultimately achievable. Senior Leader One felt that the responsibilities of middle leaders are realistic; however they will often need to juggle many tasks, including their teaching load. Senior Leader Three observed:

The role itself is still manageable. People are still enjoying the challenge of it. They are still able to achieve successes out of that. Because, if they couldn't, if it was not tenable, the situation where the scope of the role had got beyond one person, our systems allow us to say we're going to reduce that.... They [middle leaders] know that we will afford support, time and resources.

Limited role authority and recognition

Some middle leaders expressed a sense of frustration at having limited authority. They observed that middle leaders lacked opportunities to be involved in whole-school planning or decision-making. Middle Leader One explained that:

In the ideal school I think the [subject-based middle leader] should have a lot of dialogue in so far as the direction the school goes and how things actually develop. But, in reality, it comes down to one decision and way, as we act sort of as consultants towards getting the best possible outcome with the Deputy Principal.

Middle Leader Four commented that although they did not have authority over the ultimate decision, they were still able to express their views and ideas: “I know I'm a secondary level manager, so it's never really my say as to whether things happen or not, but I've got a forum to express my views”. Middle Leader One thought that middle leaders needed further involvement in school leadership processes and suggested that schools should avoid a top-down leadership model in favour of a more reciprocal and collaborative leadership model. “You don't have to actually pay them more, but you just have to involve them [middle leaders] more in part of the

management process. Rather than having just a top-down [leadership model], have it going up and down”. More specifically, Middle Leader One, a subject leader, said, “I’d like to get Heads of Learning Areas more involved in timetabling and financial decisions in the school”. Whilst middle leaders may have opportunities to voice their opinions, Middle Leader Six felt that senior leaders do not always take on board the suggestions or concerns of middle leaders. Middle Leader Six explained:

Whole-school policies are a big influence and as I said there are some policies that are chiefly made up by the executive team and we don’t have any say in them. And we can make suggestions but as far as I can see those suggestions aren’t taken on board. That’s one of the frustrating roles we have.

Senior Leader Two commented that the support, success and leadership of middle leaders are crucial to the school’s development and that while middle leaders may play a secondary role in policy development, their input is listened to.

Thus, whilst middle leaders are primarily concerned with their own specialist areas, they desired more involvement in whole-school leadership and additional authority and autonomy to more directly influence broader changes and decisions within the school community. This being said, some of the middle leaders interviewed acknowledged that their personal level of role authority had naturally increased with their level of experience in the position. Middle Leader Two explained that, individually, they now had more input into school decision-making and planning than when they had first started in middle leadership: “As you are in the position longer your opinion is sought a lot more”. Middle Leader Two added that more experience in middle leadership had led to increased autonomy as well as authority, and they were allowed a heightened degree of professional freedom.

In addition to concerns about limited role authority, some middle leaders also felt that the importance of their role was being undervalued or overlooked by the school community. Middle Leader Three expressed “a feeling of the lack of being valued by the system”. Middle Leader One agreed:

There doesn’t seem to be lot of care for people in my position... Principals often get the focus and they certainly get financially cared for and the

teachers are supported, but it's the middle [leaders who] often seem to get left waving in the breeze.

On the topic of financial remuneration and recognition, Middle Leader Three commented, "I think it [middle leadership] is grossly underpaid for the job". Middle Leader Six, a pastoral-based leader, felt that their role was not as valued as those of subject or program-based middle leaders: "I suppose sometimes we [pastoral-based middle leaders] feel as though we're not as valued as the subject [middle leaders], yet I think that our job is just as important". Middle Leader Nine, a program-based middle leader felt that on the whole, "there is a need to definitely recognise the role of [middle leaders] more significantly". On the other hand, each of the senior leaders interviewed expressed the view that middle leadership was essential to the operation and success of their school: "Our school could not operate on the model that it does without [middle leaders], that's how significant they are", Senior Leader One stated. Senior Leader Two commented that middle leaders are "absolutely vital"; similarly, Senior Leader Three commented that middle leadership positions are "absolutely essential". The contrast between the high degree of importance senior leaders placed on middle leadership and the perception held by some middle leaders that their position was under-valued, suggests the need for greater acknowledgement, recognition and perhaps remuneration of middle leaders.

Role tensions and conflict

The issue of role conflict also arose in the interviews. Several middle leaders commented that conflicts can arise with other school members because of their work as middle leaders. "Sometimes to do what I have to do, the staff wouldn't be that happy with the outcome, because it's the kids' welfare that I have to look after", Middle Leader Seven explained. On the issue of role tension, Senior Leader One observed, "I can imagine that if you've got people in your department who are being very negative about things, that's very difficult for middle leaders". Some middle leaders had also experienced a sense of confusion or a conflict of loyalty when the expectations or ideas of senior leaders had varied from those of the other staff members. Middle Leader Eight, for instance explained, "I didn't expect to be pulled from left, right and centre, from every direction... Everyone, a lot of the time, has

got different ideas about how things should be done and there's me in the middle. Well, who do I go with? Who's making the right choice?"

3. Organisational function

The organisational function of middle leaders at a whole-school level was categorised into core areas: communication, decision-making and planning, and support. These four areas of middle leaders' work are explored below.

Coordination

Despite a view that they possessed limited role authority, middle leaders saw their role as being a linchpin within the school community. Middle Leader Six stated:

I think they [middle leaders] are very important to the school because the school is a very busy place and you can't just have one or two people organising all of these things, you need a number of people. You need a team of people....

Middle Leader Three observed, "many middle leaders are proactive and actually... stop a lot of the problems before they happen". Specifically, middle leaders fulfil several organisational functions by contributing to the operation, communication, decision-making and planning of their schools.

At an operational level, middle leaders work to achieve the objectives or goals of their school, through their day-to-day duties and interactions. "One of the factors [influencing my work] is the needs of the [school] as a whole and then also of the individual students who we work with. That's our focus", Middle leader Nine said. Middle Leader Two explained that a key role of middle leaders is to ensure that all students are given equal learning opportunities, "making sure that the curriculum is implemented correctly and that all students are being given the opportunity to learn within the classroom". Middle Leader Two added that middle leaders are needed for the consistent coordination and operation of their program: "They [middle leadership positions] are very necessary. You need to have someone lead the different learning

areas. If there wasn't anyone there, each teacher would go off and do their own thing". Senior Leader One explained that middle leaders are vital in the day-to-day operation of their school: "Huge amounts of all the day-to-day things that are happening, happen through our middle [leaders]. They are just so diverse and so talented". Later in the interview Senior Leader One reiterated this point, commenting that, "[middle leaders] are pivotal in our structure. This school could not do what it does without our middle [leaders]. Because each one takes very seriously their area of responsibility and they make that happen". Similarly, Senior Leader Two commented, "it's [middle leadership] pretty crucial. I'd say the middle [leaders], in many ways, do a lot of the 'nitty gritty' work".

Communication

In addition to a coordination role, middle leaders were seen to play an important communication function within their school. Senior Leader Three said, "it's about people", and elaborated by saying that building strong relationships was important to ensure a positive working environment for staff and students. One important and unique responsibility of middle leaders is the role they play in providing a link between teaching staff and senior leaders. Middle Leader Eight stated that "I think we're a quite important stepping stone" in the communication between senior leaders and teaching staff. Senior Leader One expressed the view that the most important function of middle leadership is to provide a bridge between teachers and the school's senior leaders: "To sit in the middle between your classroom teacher who is working at the individual class level and your senior management...is the most important thing that they do".

Central to the importance of the middle leader's role is that they have direct, daily contact with teaching staff and students. Middle Leader Eight explained that:

We [middle leaders] play a very, very vital role. I think that because we have contact time with a class, we're a good face for the kids, we are easily approachable. Whereas the Heads of School sometimes aren't; the Principal and Vice-Principal aren't. The kids don't have a relationship with those

people, because they never actually interact with them. Whereas with us [middle leaders], they're constantly interacting with us.

Middle Leader Four, similarly, explained that middle leaders play an important role in bridging students and leaders and developing positive relationships within the school community, saying, "I guess it's not so intimidating to build a relationship with people and you get to feel the heartbeat of what's really going on and then you can really make a difference in that area". Senior Leader Two agreed:

They [middle leaders] are more in contact on a daily basis with kids and staff and so therefore their role and the leadership they show is pretty critical in terms of what teachers do and don't do and the extent to which their tasks are performed well.

Because they are in the position to directly communicate with staff, students and parents on a daily basis, middle leaders can understand and voice the concerns of others to the senior leaders. Middle Leader Three stated, "we [middle leaders] have to bring the concerns of the staff to the executive of the school". Middle Leader Four explained that in their role as middle leaders they can identify and help to address concerns of staff members.

Decision-making and planning

Middle leaders can also function in a decision-making and planning capacity, with varying degrees of involvement. According to Senior Leader Three, middle leaders are integral to school decision-making and act as a catalyst in the planning process. Senior Leader Three commented that when it comes to strategic planning, "we have a very thorough school process", in which middle leaders work with their departments when undertaking school planning or review; they will then collate the information from teachers for the senior leader to discuss, and contribute ideas at senior meetings. Middle leaders can help to create ideas and initiatives. They may also function as consultants and informants to the senior leaders in the decision-making processes: "We [middle leaders] act as consultants towards getting the best possible outcome with the Deputy Principal" (Middle Leader One). Another important function of middle leaders in whole-school decision-making and planning

is their ability to provide specific direction and advice in curriculum or pastoral matters. “You need a team of people. Because there are so many things that are happening in the school with curriculum and pastoral care, it’s really important that you have leadership in those directions so it can flow really well”, Middle Leader Six explained. Middle leaders also have the important responsibility of putting school-wide policies and plans into action, as Middle Leader Five explained: “We’re the ones that implement the structures that come down from the senior executives”. Middle Leader Five reiterated this point later in the interview commenting, “we are responsible for making sure that the policies of the school are brought into the classroom”. Middle Leader One commented, “primarily I’m responsible to the Principal to make sure that his or her ideas are translated through to the staff”. Importantly, Senior Leader Two confirmed this function, observing that middle leaders play an important role in a school, as they can control the extent to which school policies and plans are implemented at a classroom level. “The success and failure of [school] policies really depend on the support of middle [leaders] and the extent to which they express those policies in their day-to-day activities”, Senior Leader Two explained.

Support

In addition to their operational, communication and decision-making functions, middle leaders also support members of the school community. Middle Leader Two explained that an important part of their role as middle leader is simply to listen to others: “You’re meant to be a sounding-board for other people”. Those in middle leadership positions saw the position as providing essential support within schools. Many of the middle leaders interviewed suggested that the most important aspect of the role was to provide for the educational needs and welfare of the students. “Probably the most important person I have to look at is the kids and they are my focus”, Middle Leader Seven said. “The most important thing is the quality and the care of the students and in order to achieve that you need to take care of your staff. You need to make sure that they’re protected and managed and encouraged”, Middle Leader One observed. In particular, middle leaders work to ensure that all students have equal learning opportunities. Middle Leader Seven explained that a crucial part

of their job is “looking after the individual child and making sure that they get where they need to go”.

As well as supporting students, middle leaders also play a role in supporting teaching staff: “I have to make sure that the staff aren’t feeling too vulnerable or overwhelmed by their responsibilities, so there is a pastoral role in that”, Middle Leader One explained. Middle leaders can be viewed as professional role models for other school staff, providing a sense of clarity and direction for their colleagues. Senior Leader Two believed that being a strong, professional role model was a key function of middle leaders, saying that an effective middle leader needs:

...to be an outstanding teacher and to set high standards for everything that they do and everything that they expect other people to do. Basically, the only way to lead is through the standard you set for yourself and the example you can provide for other people.

Middle Leader Two recognised that middle leaders had an expectation to be professional mentors for less experienced colleagues, “because I’m in middle [leadership] and they refer to us as ‘leaders’ in the school, whatever we do we are role models and we have to be careful about how we present ourselves”. As well as supporting the students and teaching staff, middle leaders can also function as a support to the school’s leaders. Middle Leader Nine felt that an experienced middle leader has an important responsibility to support peers, commenting: “I have delivered professional development on a regular basis in the last three or four years to assist other people in middle [leadership]”. Senior Leader One also felt that middle leaders play an important role in supporting the work of teachers and senior leaders: “They have a role in assisting a teacher to manage whatever is the difficulty and they handle most of the little sorts of things that teachers need, so only the high order [issues] come up to the top”. Middle Leader Four explained that supporting the school’s senior leaders is very important:

It’s just impossible for a school this size [to be led by] a few people at the top. They would just be in maintenance mode if they were trying to run a school like this. They would just be trying to get through to the next day, without creating any new initiatives or ideas.

The middle leaders interviewed considered that their leadership position allowed them to have a strong influence on teaching and the school community, and they emphasised the importance of promoting effective middle leadership within schools. Middle leaders have the ability to provide a clear sense of forward direction and shared purpose. Middle Leader Seven, for example, saw their role as an ‘overseer’ within their area of responsibility; someone who could see the broader picture and direction. Middle Leader Six, a pastoral-based leader, explained that “ultimately as [middle leaders], we are supposed to have a vision for our [program] that complements what the school’s values are. We are supposed to be making sure that we are all striving in the same direction”. Whilst middle leaders may have the potential to strengthen educational outcomes and assist with the effective operation of a school, their centrality in schools means that ineffective middle leadership can have a negative impact on school performance. “If middle [leaders] are ineffective for whatever reason, because they’re the linchpin, it has a very negative effect on teaching and the whole community”, Middle Leader One cautioned.

4. Effective qualities

The interview participants were asked to consider the characteristics of effective middle leaders, as well as any strategies or advice that might prove useful for other middle leaders. The school leaders’ responses to these topics are outlined below.

Characteristics of effective middle leaders

When asked what skills and qualities are required for effective middle leadership, a wide range of attributes were suggested. In terms of personal qualities, several middle leaders stressed the need for intelligence, innovation and flexibility. “If you’re not flexible then if things go wrong or if things change, [you’re not] able to change with them”, Middle Leader Five explained. Effective middle leaders were expected to possess a strong sense of self-efficacy, motivation and commitment to the role. Being open-minded, and having the ability to problem-solve and see the ‘bigger picture’ were other valued qualities identified by middle leaders.

Additionally, effective middle leaders were expected to exhibit enthusiasm for the role and have the ability to encourage and inspire others.

The primary skill identified by several middle leaders was the ability to communicate effectively with others. Middle leaders believed that exceptional interpersonal skills were critical in order to successfully lead in the middle. “Interpersonal skills are one of the key skills needed by middle [leadership]”, Middle Leader Three commented, and also suggested that “there should be a better process for evaluating the interpersonal skills of applicants in the selection process”. Middle Leader Eight stated that “you need to have fantastic interpersonal skills, because in our position with a large variety of people, you really do need to be able to interact with everyone and all different personality types”. Being approachable, tactful and respectful of others were seen as valuable qualities for middle leaders. “I think you need to be straight down the line, I think you need to be forthright in the way you communicate with people”, Middle Leader Two stated.

The need for strong teaching, organisational and administrative skills was also emphasised. Middle Leader Six reflected that “you need to be so organised, and I think I am organised”. Middle leaders explained the need to carefully document the jobs they perform, and manage time effectively by carefully selecting and prioritising the tasks that need to be undertaken. Effective time management was seen as another critical skill. Middle Leader Two explained that when they first took on a middle leadership position, “the actual job wasn’t hard in itself, it was just the time management more than anything”. Middle Leader Two continued, “when you’re teaching your own classes, especially senior school classes, it is a time management [issue] that you need to worry about”. Middle Leader Seven explained the need for effective time management:

I probably shouldn’t take on so many things and [should] concentrate more on others. But it’s the nature of the beast you know...I have my own priorities but sometimes they get lost in need. Because ultimately, if someone comes to you with an issue, you’ve got to do something about it.

When managing time, Middle Leader Nine explained that middle leaders need to learn to “focus on [their] core business”. Related to time management is the ability to

delegate responsibility when needed. Middle Leader Four explained that this is an important skill for middle leaders:

This year I didn't delegate as much as I probably should have. In some respects it was good because I got to know the kids a lot more...but at the same time I didn't have the time really to do it and it would have been better to delegate it.

Other skills or qualities outlined by middle leaders as necessary for effective middle leadership include the ability to work in teams, to use information technology effectively, and to possess confident fiscal management and administrative skills.

When Senior Leaders were asked what skills or qualities they believe are necessary for effective middle leadership, each emphasised different attributes. Senior Leader One stated:

We look obviously for someone who's very innovative in their area. We look for someone who's a team player. It's no good being up there and out the front, if nobody's following or you're not working with anybody, which is even worse. So you've got to be a good people person.

Senior Leader Two explained that middle leaders need to be outstanding teachers and excellent practitioners in order for teachers and staff to respect them as leaders. Senior Leader Three suggested that effective middle leaders need to be enthusiastic, flexible, well-organised and be creative, forward thinkers. Senior Leader Three also commented that an increasingly important skill set required by middle leaders is interpersonal skills: "They need to be able to manage people". According to Senior Leader Three, certain curriculum or professional knowledge can be readily learnt by middle leaders and, therefore, might not necessarily be as high a priority as the need for effective people skills. Senior Leader Three pointed out that there is no one set of selection criteria suited to all schools or all middle leadership positions. Instead, when appointing staff for middle leadership roles it's about finding the right individual for the specific job: "You can see it. You can pick it very quickly".

Strategies and advice for middle leaders

Commonly, middle leaders expressed the need to be proactive in seeking help or advice. Several of the middle leaders interviewed explained that it is important for middle leaders to learn to ask questions of other staff members in the school. Middle Leader Six explained:

A lot of what you do in this job, you learn on the go, and fortunately people are very good here and you just have to ask, “what do I do now?” And that’s what happened when I first started the job.

Middle Leader Seven also suggested that middle leaders need to directly request support for the work that they do: “Don’t be afraid to ask for assistance or training, rather than just hoping you can get it by osmosis, because you don’t”. Other middle leaders suggested seeking the help of a mentor, joining a professional organisation and being proactive in developing strong relationship with other staff members. “Part of the success you have is by developing relationships so they [colleagues] trust [you]”, Middle Leader Seven claimed. Similarly, Middle Leader Four observed, “most of the time if they [staff under your leadership] feel like you are a friend and you’re alongside them as a fellow colleague, then you’ll get a lot more trust and support”. Senior Leader One suggested that newly appointed middle leaders really get to know their staff and build strong relationships. Senior Leader Two commented that, “the most successful [middle leaders] I’ve seen are in amongst it and communicating with their staff all the time and are good with people as well as being particular about their paperwork”.

In addition to being proactive in seeking support, middle leaders felt that being reflective was a crucial strategy needed to effectively meet the demands of the position. Some felt that it is necessary for middle leaders to learn from other staff members. “There’s a real learning curve and I think you need to glean off what everyone else around you [is doing]”, Middle Leader Four observed. Senior Leader Three agreed, suggesting that middle leaders must rely on the experience within their team and trust that they will be supported. It was also recommended that middle leaders take the time to observe what needs to be changed or achieved before making decisive plans. “I think a lot of leaders try too hard. They think ‘I’ve got the position now’ and try to assert their authority”, Middle Leader Four explained. Instead,

Middle Leader Five suggested that middle leaders need to “come into the role without any big expectations. As in, just wait and see what the role is going to lead you to do”. Senior Leader One, similarly, suggested that middle leaders need to closely observe what is happening in their area of responsibility before making any changes. Another reflective skill middle leaders should hone, according to Middle Leader Eight, is the ability to learn from your mistakes. “You have to be prepared to learn by your mistakes sometimes, because when I first started doing the job I was thinking ‘I could have done that a bit better, maybe I should have done it like this’”, Middle Leader Eight commented.

Along with effective personal management and reflection strategies, the middle leaders interviewed also suggested that effective motivational strategies and positive attitudes are required to productively fulfil their role. Middle Leader Six explained that, in order to be effective, middle leaders should have a clear goal and professional direction: “I think you need to be able to have a really positive vision and just try to aspire to that”. Other middle leaders advised the need to focus on the needs of the students, to be content with the role and enjoy challenges, and trust that they will be supported; to focus on taking “just ... one day at a time” (Middle Leader Five).

5. Job preparation and professional development needs

The school leaders interviewed were asked to consider their support and professional development requirements. This next section explores how middle leaders characterise their transition into middle leadership, their professional learning needs, and the factors which may impede some middle leaders from accessing professional learning opportunities.

The transition to middle leadership

Several of the middle leaders interviewed explained that their transition from classroom teacher to middle leadership was a time of uncertainty. Middle Leader Five described the early experience of middle leadership: “I started with feeling

overwhelmed and feeling like I've got all of this pressure and all this work on me". Commonly, middle leaders explained that they experienced a lack of direction and clarity about what was expected of them, and about how to manage their new responsibilities. Middle Leader One, for example, described their transition to middle leadership as "clumsy": "I was never actually given any formal instructions as to, 'these are your new roles'. I had to basically go back and look at the job description and try to work out how things work". Some of the middle leaders interviewed suggested that there was a clear need for middle leaders to undergo specific instruction before taking on the position. "I think a lot of the time, people I've seen come into [middle leadership positions] ... are just put into that position", Middle Leader Eight explained. Likewise Middle Leader Three claimed that, "I think there should be far more training for the job".

Despite the view that middle leaders lacked formal instructional opportunities, they suggested that their schools do offer support for new middle leaders, including induction programs and mentoring opportunities with other middle leaders. Middle Leader Four felt that "having mentors who have walked [the path] before and have actually tried things out is one of the most useful forms of professional development". On the topic of peer mentoring, Middle Leader Eight said:

I think there needs to be more of a mentoring program within the school. Maybe the person who is taking over a job comes in for a couple of weeks before taking over the role, just to see how the department runs, because there's got to be a handover [period].

Many of the middle leaders commented that as a beginning middle leader, they had sought the help of a mentor, to help them through the transitional stage. Senior Leader One explained that their school mentoring sessions took the form of fortnightly meetings.

The degree of prior professional experience as a classroom teacher is an important factor influencing the transitional experience of new middle leaders. Many of the middle leaders interviewed suggested that their previous work experience either in teaching or outside of the education profession was central in preparing them for an middle leadership position in education. Reflecting on previous experience, Middle Leader Four commented, "it was fairly natural for me to progress back into

leadership”. According to those interviewed, varied teaching experience provides educators with many of the skills needed to be effective middle leaders. Middle Leader Three observed, “in some ways it [the transition to middle leadership] is easy, because you are still teaching. And as you became an experienced teacher you’ve picked up a lot of what was needed to be a good [middle leader]”. Middle Leader Three also commented that “much experience in the classroom is a necessary prerequisite to be a good administrator and I think too many people have too fast promotion when they haven’t developed the interpersonal skills to deal with many different teaching situations”. Middle Leader Seven expanded on how their previous teaching experience was beneficial:

It [the transition] has been comfortable because I taught for twenty years before I started doing it [middle leadership]. So I had experienced all levels of a school before. I knew the pitfalls and things not to do and things I wanted to do.

Middle Leader Nine explained that a gradual transition from classroom teaching to middle leadership can also help to avoid a difficult transition into middle leadership: “I’ve learnt my administrative skills along the way, starting with just having been released for two or three hours a week and mentoring with other people”. Senior Leader Two commented that broad professional experience is important for middle leaders, and speaking more generally about education, suggested that teacher shortages have meant that sometimes staff without considerable experience have been promoted to middle leadership positions.

Many of the middle leaders interviewed explained that much of their training for middle leadership had taken place “on the job”, rather than through formal, professional learning programs. Middle Leader Six commented:

A lot of what you do in this job, you learn on the go, and fortunately people are very good here, and you just have to ask, “what do I do now?” And that’s what happened when I first started the job

Middle Leader Seven agreed:

The whole job is learning on the job. I mean you can give PD [professional development] on how to deal with an angry parent or whatever, but it's more to do with making the mistake first and then not repeating it again.

Middle Leader Seven also expanded on the concept of leadership preparation: "It's [leadership] probably learnt, it's probably me as a personality.... Probably the experience of relating to kids and parents and other staff has helped me but I think that's more natural than actually taught". Despite the need to "learn on the job", some middle leaders felt that a lack formal instruction hindered their performance. Middle Leader Nine observed: "Sometimes I believe that we don't get the training that we require to do the job the best way possible".

Professional development

Many of the middle leaders saw a need for ongoing professional development, and believed that professional learning opportunities for middle leaders could be improved. Some had not been offered professional development specifically targeting leadership skills, and several observed that there was a lack of professional learning courses which are specifically aimed at the needs of middle leaders. Middle Leader Two commented: "Middle leaders definitely need to have something [professional learning] put in place, similar to what you would in the executive area". Middle Leader Three agreed that professional learning opportunities targeting the needs of middle leaders are limited, saying "there has been professional development but they have been of a general nature and not really specific for what I need for my job". Likewise, Middle Leader Four observed "there's a lot of good [professional learning] out there but it is sort of removed from what we are doing". Senior Leader Three felt that middle leadership was the least serviced area in terms of targeted professional learning opportunities. The need for a "staged, well documented leadership program" within education was asserted by Senior Leader Three, as well as the need for targeted professional learning opportunities for middle leaders. Similarly, Senior Leader One commented that a lot of the professional

learning on offer was targeted at senior leaders or teachers, rather than specifically addressing the needs of middle leaders.

Some of the forms of professional learning undertaken by middle leaders included attending in-service sessions relating to subject area content and curriculum issues, or courses about pastoral care. Several middle leaders had attended management or leadership training courses. Others had decided to undertake further academic learning at a post-graduate level, typically with a focus on educational leadership. “I’m also studying and doing a Masters so that I can improve my own current knowledge”, Middle Leader Two explained. Similarly, Middle Leader Six commented:

I have, out of my own choice, I’ve started this Masters in leadership and management, and this really enhanced my role. I’ve been able to use what I’m doing at school as a part of my study quite often, and it has a direct relationship to what I do at school.

Middle Leader One had undertaken no formal leadership training and commented that, “I read what I can to help me in this position”.

Middle leaders were asked to identify the skills and knowledge they would like the opportunity to learn in order to assist with their roles. Fiscal management, the use and application of information and communication technologies, current curriculum directions, and program-specific professional knowledge were a few of the areas in which middle leaders desired further professional learning opportunities. Personal management and time management were also commonly identified as skills which middle leaders felt they would like to develop. “It was quite difficult to start with”, Middle Leader Two explained, “[and] I found that time management wise, it was very hard”. Many middle leaders also identified interpersonal skills and conflict management as essential skills they would want to learn more about. “Sometimes it is harder organising teachers than it is students” Middle Leader Six reflected. Middle Leader Nine felt that further instruction in administrative skills might allow middle leaders to focus more time on educationally-focused activities: “It’s about learning the ways to improve the mundane administrative tasks, so that they don’t become the focus of all of your time”. Senior Leader Two felt that middle leaders would benefit from further instruction in problem solving and lateral thinking skills. Overall,

middle leaders expressed a belief that professional learning is needed to support middle leaders as their role changes and they face new challenges. Middle Leader Three remarked: “Schools are very bad in training middle [leadership]...They don’t get enough professional development to reflect the change in their job over the years”. Likewise, Middle Leader Seven explained that ongoing professional learning is crucial for middle leadership, because “I think it’s about being able to learn how to move forward, how to take on new challenges, to take risks sensibly in the new things you are going to do”.

Restrictions on professional development

Aside from a perceived lack of professional learning courses specifically targeting the needs of middle leaders, those interviewed suggested that there are other reasons why middle leaders may not receive ongoing professional development. The cost of professional learning courses may deter some middle leaders; “there is a lot out there [in the way of leadership courses], but they’re quite expensive”, Middle Leader Two explained. However, the senior leaders interviewed all explained that within their schools a policy and budget was in place to support the professional learning needs of middle leaders. Senior Leader Three explained that middle leaders needed to regularly and proactively ask for specific professional learning opportunities. Heavy workload and time restrictions can also make it difficult for middle leaders to undertake professional development and later apply the skills they learn. Middle Leader Seven commented that they were at times reluctant to undertake professional learning: “Yes I have been offered [professional learning opportunities] but I avoid them. And I quite enjoy them when I do [attend] them, but ...I’ve got enough to do as it is”. Similarly, Middle Leader Eight said, “Professional development is always offered, taking it on board is a different thing though. It depends on what other things I’ve got on at the time”. Senior Leader Two expressed a similar view, explaining that the workload of middle leaders, as well as their teaching commitment, made it difficult for middle leaders to undertake professional learning courses during school hours.

6. Support and review

The need for schools to better support middle leaders was raised by several middle leaders. “I feel that [the middle leadership position] wouldn’t be too demanding if we had the sort of support that I think could be possible. I think it can be quite manageable if we have the support that we need to have”, Middle Leader Six explained. Middle Leader Nine commented, “I don’t think that there is a need to change the responsibilities [of middle leaders]. I think maybe there is a need to change some of the systems to support the role”. Aside from further professional learning opportunities, middle leaders were asked to consider what factors would better support them in their role. One of the suggestions made by middle leaders was the need for more opportunities to communicate, collaborate and consult with other school leaders. This might include regular times for meetings with other middle leaders. Middle Leader One suggested that, “I would create more forums for discussion, for future planning at a middle [leadership] level. And I would liberate specific time, during school time for that to happen”. On the topic of additional meetings with other middle leaders, Middle Leader Four explained that, “I feel like there are issues that I’d like to discuss regarding the welfare of the school and I think we [middle leaders] are not meeting enough to really effectively address those issues”.

Along with more opportunities to communicate with other middle leaders, more regular meetings with the school’s senior leaders were also requested. In some schools this was occurring, with Senior Leader One commenting that in their school, middle leaders did meet with the senior leaders regularly and that “any member of [the middle leadership] team can bring items to be discussed”. Overall, some middle leaders felt that schools should look at promoting a more collaborative approach to leadership, in order to better support middle leaders. “I think having a more collaborative approach would be better in a sense. It would take pressure off you a little bit and give you direction and wisdom in decision-making”, Middle Leader Four commented. Likewise, Middle Leader Nine felt that “if you’re trying to work in isolation or if you don’t have regular meetings where you can get together and discuss the bigger issues, it could be a difficult job”.

In addition to more opportunities to collaborate with other school leaders, middle leaders also suggested that clear and formalised position requirements would make their role easier to perform. “I think with a lot of these [positions] once they’ve been established it’s actually a lot easier...it’s a lot more streamlined”, Middle Leader Four explained. Another common appeal by middle leaders was the need for more non-teaching time to achieve the position requirements of middle leadership. Many of the middle leaders interviewed felt that the amount of time they had been allocated outside of their teaching load was inadequate to effectively fulfil the position requirements. “I think our roles are fine, I just think the time allocation needs to be [increased] a bit more”, Middle Leader Five explained. “Time would be a big issue”, Middle Leader One commented. Middle Leader Seven explained that, “It’s alright to give [middle leaders] more responsibility but you need to make sure that the time is there for them to do the actual job”. Middle Leader Five suggested, “If we had more time, we’d be able to organise more things a lot more effectively”. On the issue of time allocations for middle leaders, Senior Leader Two remarked:

In an ideal world they [middle leaders] would be teaching less and have more time allocated for them to complete all of their tasks. I think that they’re struggling with their current workload to do a good job because they simply don’t have the time.

Later in the interview, Senior Leader Two commented that ideally, time and money for middle leaders should be increased, but explained that this was not feasible for most schools.

The provision of clear and effective systems and policies, and in some cases, the need for improved operational systems could also help to support middle leaders in their role. Middle Leader Six, for example, suggested that there is a need for “strong structures and procedures that would support [middle leaders] in dealing with students”. In particular, improved communication systems and performance review systems were seen as important for middle leaders. In terms of the performance review, the accountability requirements of middle leadership positions varied according to schools and, at times, according to role. Several middle leaders were unclear about the nature and frequency of performance review processes within their schools. Middle Leader One, for example, explained, “there is a staff appraisal that

to my knowledge has never happened with a [subject-based middle leader]”. Middle Leader Five, who was new to the position, was not certain about the appraisal procedures relating to the position, and commented, “I’m not 100% sure that there is an appraisal. I think obviously there is an ongoing assessment of what we do”. Middle Leader Four explained that accountability and appraisal procedures were more informal at their school: “I meet with senior staff regularly to talk about what I am doing, so there is accountability there but not in a formal sense”. Likewise, Middle Leader Six explained that appraisal meetings were more informal in their school, “we are supposed to be with [senior leaders] every week to talk about what’s going on, but the process has broken down for a number of reasons. I tend to informally go and talk to the [Head of School] about various issues”. Despite the lack of formal or consistent review processes in some schools, Middle Leader Three thought that performance review was important for staff reflection and support, and said that at their school, “it isn’t an appraisal process. It is performance management, with the view to improving”. Senior Leader Two summed up: “A problem we have in education and always have had, is the lack of ongoing review, feedback and accountability of staff through reasonably formal processes”.

More staffing at the middle leadership level and increased access to administrative assistance could help to reduce the work demands of middle leaders. Middle leaders felt that increased staffing at the middle leadership level was needed to help remove work pressures. For Middle Leader Three, it was simply that “there [are] not enough people to do the work that the job requires”. Middle Leader Eight explained:

I don’t think it helps that we’re such a small school too, because we are still expected to do all these things, but we don’t have as many staff to assist us with that. So our roles are very, very demanding.

Finally, access to additional administrative support or assistance was suggested as a means to better support middle leaders: “I think really it’s a matter of having time or assistance from another person to help me do these particular tasks more efficiently”, Middle Leader Nine remarked.

7. Aspirations and satisfaction

This final section outlines middle leaders' perceived levels of role fulfilment, the reasons why educators chose to take on a middle leadership position, the position-related goals of middle leaders, and their career expectations and aspirations.

Motivation for being a middle leader

What motivates people to take on a middle leadership position? Many of the middle leaders interviewed explained that they enjoyed their middle leadership position because it provided them with an opportunity to pursue a leadership role whilst still maintaining a significant teaching role. Middle Leader One remarked, "I really enjoy the classroom and I don't like to lose that connection with the students. But I'm finding that I can help teachers now, which is great". Several middle leaders explained that they took on a middle leadership position in order to show and share their expertise and because their abilities matched those needed for the position. "I started to see that I could get my ideas, that I've built up over the years, actually put into practice", Middle Leader One commented. Middle Leader Four explained the decision to apply for a middle leadership position by saying, "I guess it was looking at my use and abilities and looking at the position and feeling like I would be able to sustain that [position]". Likewise, Senior Leader One explained, "I think a lot of people realise...they've got expertise or they really enjoy working with a team of staff". Many middle leaders were drawn to the position because they felt it would offer them a positive challenge. Middle Leader Four, for example, stated, "I'm always learning and growing and developing more skills. I think I'm in a position where it's given me lots of leadership responsibilities". Similarly, some middle leaders explained that they were dissatisfied with their teaching role and were looking for a different role. Middle Leader Seven explained: "I got a bit bored teaching. The classroom is a really tedious place, you've got to be there at a certain time and you can't leave there until a certain time". When senior leaders were asked why they felt educators may take on a middle leadership position, whilst stating reasons that corresponded to those of middle leaders, they also suggested increased pay (Senior Leader One), as well as a sense of vocation and the opportunity to work in teams (Senior Leader Two).

Position-related goals

During the interviews, middle leaders were also asked to reflect on the goals they would like to achieve in their middle leadership position. Most middle leaders explained that their main aim was to effectively carry out the educational programs they had initiated. Middle Leader Five, for example, expressed the hope to carry out the role to the best of her ability, saying, “I just want to continue what I am doing and do it well”. The middle leaders interviewed hoped over time to review, consolidate or expand their education programs. Middle Leaders Eight and Nine explained that they wanted to develop an effective educational program that would be highly respected within the school or broader educational community. Certain Middle Leaders, especially those who lacked a strong sense of role clarity, also wished to develop more structure and direction within their position. Middle Leader Seven, for example said:

I think that a goal for a position is that the job can be done without you there.... These roles are personality based but there must be a structure there that another can just jump into it and take on the role quite effectively.

Aside from the development and improvement of their education programs, many middle leaders wished to improve the levels of staff, student and parent involvement in their program. In particular, Middle Leaders Four and Five wanted to build stronger relationships with school community members; as Middle Leader Five put it: “Actually having responsibility and having that relationship with students and teachers I think that’s really important”. Middle Leader Five also wanted to develop a more cohesive and collaborative culture within the department. In addition to strengthening relations with school members, Middle Leader Nine aimed to develop wider links with the community, in order to enrich their educational program. Importantly, many middle leaders aimed to improve student achievement, to motivate students and to better support any students with specific learning needs.

Career expectations and aspirations

Middle leaders were asked to reflect on their longer term professional goals or expectations. With this in mind, several of those interviewed explained that they saw

middle leadership as a ‘stepping stone’ to higher levels of educational leadership. A number of middle leaders aimed to eventually take on a more senior leadership position within their school. Middle Leader One, for example, explained that: “I would like to operate at a higher level of [leadership], but I don’t desire that out of a sense of professional ambition, it’s just where I can help in the next role”. Similarly, Middle Leader Six hoped for the opportunity to become a more senior leader, saying, “I think that in a couple of years’ time I would like to go up to the next level and be a Head of School or Deputy”. Senior Leader One explained that, “Some people I think see it [middle leadership] as a step to a senior executive position; somebody who is fairly ambitious and perhaps wants to be a Deputy Principal or Principal”. However, not all the middle leaders interviewed desired to work at the senior leadership level. Middle Leader Eight, for example, wanted to experience a different role at the middle leadership level. The majority of middle leaders interviewed were currently satisfied with their middle leadership role and not seeking further promotion. “I’ve got enough to deal with for the next few years with what I’m doing now”, Middle Leader Four explained. Middle Leader Seven commented that “I’m very happy doing what I am doing. I don’t see myself moving into the role of a Deputy or a Principal”. Rather than a desire to take on more senior leadership duties, many middle leaders actually expressed a sense of reluctance.

The reasons why middle leaders may not wish to pursue a senior leadership position varied. Commonly, middle leaders held the perception that senior leadership roles are more focused on administrative duties or would require them to give up subject teaching. Middle Leader Four explained:

I really enjoy what I’m doing now. I like diversity and it’s interesting. I’m having a real impact on students and I’m more closely connected to what’s happening at the ground level. Whereas if you start moving up, you become less connected and you become more involved in meetings and administration.

Middle Leader Six expressed a similar view, stating “I just feel at the moment that I don’t want to give up teaching a subject that I feel so passionate about, because once you get yourself into one of those positions, you only get to teach one [class]”. Middle Leader Nine commented:

I'm still a classroom teacher. I teach for twelve hours a week and I'd like to maintain that. I know some people have moved away from that [a teaching role] all together, but to me that's very important. It's an important role and it's one I love doing.

Another reason why some middle leaders were disinclined to take on a more senior leadership role was a perception that senior leadership positions required an undesirable increase in responsibility or workload. Middle Leader Five explained, "I look at our Deputy Principals and Principal and think that I never want that role, because it's just so much responsibility and work. So I'm happy where I am". On the topic on future promotions, some middle leaders expressed a dislike of the notion of career leadership. Middle Leader One commented: "[Career leadership] creates very bad leaders. It creates people who are very young, inexperienced and don't understand the whole point of leadership, which is not about CV driven leaders". Similarly, Middle Leader Seven commented, "I have a funny feeling that those who want promotion are probably not the ones who should get promoted". Overall, most of the middle leaders interviewed expressed satisfaction with their current position. Some felt that in the future they may wish to pursue alternative goals such as to complete further post-graduate tertiary study, or to move outside of education into other professional fields.

Role fulfilment

Levels of role fulfilment will clearly vary between middle leaders; however, most of the middle leaders interviewed expressed a sense of satisfaction with their role as a middle leader. Many found their position to be professionally rewarding. Middle Leader Six explained that:

I like to think that it does give me a feeling of satisfaction that I can keep it all organised and give it a direction and I feel that students are responding well and I think it's all worth it. It's not like that everyday but quite often there are days like that when I think, "that's why I'm doing the job", because I really like to see the best come from students.

Many middle leaders spoke positively about their role as a middle leader and felt that they were well-supported by their school. As Middle Leader Two put it:

I'm quite happy in my role, and the support at this school is particularly good. There is always someone to talk to and there is always someone who will back you up or let you know that you're going along the right line.

The reasons for which middle leaders found enjoyment in their position were of course diverse and dependent on the individual leader. Middle Leader Four, for example, enjoyed the variety of work required by the position, whilst Middle Leaders Six and Seven enjoyed the responsibility and new challenges that the position offered them; "I enjoy it [middle leadership]. I enjoy the challenge. I get a lot of satisfaction out of being able to meet a challenge and also to do things the way you want to do them" (Middle Leader Six). Pastoral-based middle leaders, on the other hand, valued the opportunity to develop close connections with staff and students and saw the value of the role and its positive impact on student achievement. Other middle leaders enjoyed the greater sense of freedom and autonomy permitted by a middle leadership position. "I've got a fair bit of freedom actually", Middle Leader Four reflected. Similarly, Middle Leader Eight said, "I think being in this type of role we have a bit more freedom and flexibility than normal classroom teachers". Several middle leaders explained that they felt comfortable in their role or were developing a greater sense of confidence. Overall, middle leaders believed that middle leadership was a positive career pathway for educators: "It's a really good avenue to take...", Middle Leader Five commented. Middle Leader Eight agreed, saying, "it's a great role. Being in middle [leadership] I am thrilled". Middle Leader Three commented, "it's a career path. It's nice to have an administrative role but it's also nice to have a lot to do with students". Middle Leader Two also enjoyed the balance of leadership duties with classroom duties, saying "I still like teaching in the classroom".

Although most middle leaders expressed a sense of satisfaction and pleasure in their work, middle leaders also expressed some negative perceptions about the position. Middle Leader One, for example, reported a sense of failure, a feeling of being unable to fully meet the expectations of the role:

I think there are too many tasks there to feel like you can achieve them satisfactorily. You always feel like you're failing at something, which can weigh quite heavily on you. It creates a constant sense of "I've got to do more"

Several other middle leaders explained that they too felt pressured to continuously do more, in order to prove their competence in the position. Other middle leaders explained that they often felt stressed or overwhelmed at the demands of the position. Feelings of self doubt and of being unsupported or judged by other staff members were expressed by some middle leaders. Some middle leaders found the position to be quite isolating within the school community. "That's one of the frustrations. Feeling that sense of being a little too isolated and being too autonomous", commented Middle Leader Four. Middle Leader Six expressed feelings of frustration about the role, feeling a lack of role authority to bring about meaningful change: "One of the limitations I have is that sometimes I think that there are things that should happen with regard to students and I bring them up and nothing gets done about it and that is frustrating". As previously mentioned, some middle leaders explained that they felt undervalued or unacknowledged within the school community for the work that they do.

Summary

This chapter has presented a detailed account of the ideas and opinions expressed by middle and senior leaders during the interview process. Several issues emerged from the analysis of the interview data. The dual and dynamic nature of middle leadership was examined, as well as the problems and limitations facing some middle leaders, including a lack of role clarity, limited role authority and role conflict. Additionally, the effective qualities, professional development and support needs of middle leaders were outlined. The chapter concluded with an overview of the aspirations and level of role satisfaction expressed by middle leaders. The next chapter explains the construction of the survey instrument and presents the results from the quantitative phase of data collection.

CHAPTER SIX

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Overview

This chapter presents the results of the survey administered to middle leaders, to measure perceptions about their role and responsibilities. This survey was undertaken as the second phase of a two-part mixed methods design. The survey followed from the document analysis and semi-structured interviews in the qualitative phase of the study. A 36-item instrument was administered to 125 middle leaders in 21 Western Australian secondary schools (see Appendix C). The design and development of the survey instrument is explained in the sections below, together with an overview of the Rasch measurement model and an evaluation of the data. Five facets were measured, these were: role clarity; role authority; role support; role value and role fulfilment.

Purpose and structure of the chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the survey data, determining how well the data for each facet fit the Rasch measurement model. Bond and Fox (2001), explain that, in applying the Rasch model:

...fit statistics are used to indicate where the principles of probabilistic conjoint measurement have been sufficiently realized in practice to justify the claim that the results can be used as a measurement scale with interval measurement properties. In this case, the Rasch model question is: How well do the empirical data fit to the measurement model requirements? (p. 191)

To answer this question, data for each of the five facets were analysed separately, using RUMM 2030 (Rasch Unidimensional Measurement Models, RUMMLab, 2007). The RUMM outputs are explained in terms of what they reveal about the

data-to-model fit for each of the items and facets. That is: whether the response categories functioned as expected; whether the observed scores reflected the expected values predicted by the RUMM 2030 software (2007); whether the measurement scale for each facet clearly targeted the affirmativeness levels of the respondents; and whether each of the sub-scales were measuring a uni-dimensional trait.

Following the discussion of the data fit statistics, an overview of item affirmativeness is provided for each of the five facets. Item affirmativeness refers to the relative easiness or difficulty of the survey items and is based on the location scores generated by RUMM for each item. The higher the location score for an item (measured in logits), the more difficult that item was for middle leaders to affirm. Conversely, items with a lower location score were easier for middle leaders to endorse. Thus, by ordering the items according to their location score it is possible to identify which statements middle leaders were more likely to agree with and which statements middle leaders were more likely to disagree with or have greater difficulty affirming, relative to the other items for that facet. The chapter concludes with a combined analysis of data from the five facets to enable facet to facet comparisons.

The instrument

The instrument was designed to measure the perceptions middle leaders held about their position. A polytomous, four point, response-rating scale was used; a Likert scale. Middle leaders were provided with a stem statement for each item, and they were required to select one of the four response options which best reflected their attitude (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree and Strongly Agree). The instrument, whilst broadly focused on measuring middle leaders' role perceptions, was made up of five separate facets or sub-scales, each of which focused on a particular aspect of middle leadership. The five facets were role clarity, role authority, role support, role value and role fulfilment. The rationale underpinning this multi-faceted design was that by measuring these five aspects of middle leadership separately, the findings would combine to provide a comprehensive and multi-dimensional understanding of

middle leaders' experiences and perceptions of their position. The five facets making up the structure and focus of the survey emerged from the qualitative phase of the study, with each of the facets linking back closely to the literature on middle leadership and the results from the semi-structured interviews with middle leaders. Likewise, the individual items for each of the five facets were developed from the understandings derived from the review of literature, and more directly, from the interviews undertaken with school leaders. Thus, the preceding qualitative phase of the research was central to the design and development of the quantitative survey instrument. A brief explanation of the five facets making up the survey instrument follows.

Role clarity

The first facet is role clarity. Role clarity refers to the extent to which a middle leader perceives their role to be clearly defined and appropriate in scope. For role clarity to be high, a middle leader should have a clear understanding of the expectations and responsibilities associated with their middle leadership position, and this understanding should be shared and consistent with the views of other members of the school community. The facet of role clarity contained seven items, each designed to measure the level of role clarity middle leaders perceived within their position. Middle leaders were asked to respond to the following statements:

Item 1: In the school there is an understanding of the main duties and expectations of my position;

Item 2: The duties and expectations of my position are documented in a written position description;

Item 3: My position duties and expectations are clearly defined;

Item 4: My role is clearly delineated from other leadership positions;

Item 5: The responsibilities of my position are appropriate in scope;

Item 6: There is a shared and consistent understanding of my role within the school;

Item 7: There is a deep and detailed understanding of the role throughout the school community.

Role authority

The second facet is role authority. Role authority relates to the level of formal or informal authority middle leaders are afforded in their leadership position. This includes the degree to which middle leaders feel involved in school planning and decision-making processes, as well as the level of authority they have within the school community, enabling them to share ideas, influence others and make changes. For this facet middle leaders were asked to respond to seven items, which included the following statements:

Item 8: There are opportunities for me to contribute to whole school planning and decision making;

Item 9: There are opportunities for me to voice concerns about school issues;

Item 10: I have the authority to make decisions which affect my colleagues;

Item 11: I am regularly involved in planning or school decision making at the whole-school level;

Item 12: I am consulted by the school's senior leaders about all important whole-school decisions or plans;

Item 13: My ideas and opinions are taken into account;

Item 14: I play an influential role in whole-school development.

Role support

The third facet, role support, was designed to measure the degree to which middle leaders felt supported in their work. Support, in this context, encompasses the provision of relevant training and resources needed to undertake the responsibilities required by a middle leadership position. Middle leaders were asked to consider whether they had been provided with the appropriate time, budget, educational

resources and professional learning necessary for them to effectively fulfil their role as middle leaders. The facet of role support contained nine items:

Item 15: I have been provided with additional non-teaching time to fulfil my role;

Item 16: I have been provided with the resources required for me to fulfil my professional responsibilities;

Item 17: I have been provided with adequate training;

Item 18: I have been provided with ongoing professional learning opportunities;

Item 19: The professional learning I have undertaken has been relevant and specific to my work as a middle leader;

Item 20: I am well supported in my role;

Item 21: I receive an appropriate program budget;

Item 22: I receive an appropriate allotment of non-teaching time;

Item 23: I am provided with optimal, high quality professional support.

Role value

Role value, the fourth facet, focuses on middle leaders' perceptions about the worth and importance of their middle leadership role. Middle leaders were prompted to consider the extent to which they personally felt their work was valuable to the school community, as well as the extent to which they felt their role was valued and acknowledged by other members of the school community. Seven items were developed to measure middle leaders' perceptions of role value:

Item 24: I believe that my role is worthwhile;

Item 25: I see my role as being beneficial to the day-to-day functioning of my school;

Item 26: My work is valued by the members of the school community;

Item 27: My work is recognised by the school members;

Item 28: My colleagues view my work as being of high importance;

Item 29: My work is regularly acknowledged by members of the school community;

Item 30: My work is recognised by the school community as being vital to the school's operation and performance.

Role fulfilment

The final facet of middle leaders' role perceptions is role fulfilment. A middle leader's role fulfilment refers to the level of satisfaction and enjoyment middle leaders associate with their work. Professional fulfilment for middle leaders was seen to be connected to the positive relationships formed through the position, the positive challenges provided by the work and the overall sense of professional reward gained through the position. The last six items on the survey were developed to measure role fulfilment:

Item 31: I find satisfaction in my work;

Item 32: I find my work stimulating;

Item 33: I find my work fulfilling and rewarding;

Item 34: I enjoy the professional interactions required by the position;

Item 35: My day-to-day experience is enjoyable and positive;

Item 36: I experience a strong sense of professional satisfaction.

Requirements of the Rasch model

Bond and Fox (2001) explain that when applying the Rasch measurement model, the data needs to fit the model rather than the model being required to fit the data. There are several requirements for good data-to-model fit when using the Rasch model. The first and central requirement is 'uni-dimensionality'. Simply put, when constructing a measure, researchers need to focus on measuring only one dimension or trait at a time:

Confusing a number of attributes into a single generic score makes confident predictions from that score more hazardous and the score a less useful summary of ability or achievement. But carefully constructed tests that make good measurement estimates of single attributes might be sufficient for a number of thoughtfully decided purposes (Bond & Fox, 2001, p. 25).

In relation to the middle leadership survey, the purpose of dividing the instrument into five separate facets with separate sub-scales, and then running an individual analysis for each scale, was to help eliminate multi-dimensionality and focus on measuring a single trait at a time. Closely linked to the idea of uni-dimensionality is the need for construct validity, that is “...the idea that the recorded performances are reflections of a single underlying construct” (Bond & Fox, 2001, p. 26). In order for construct validity to be established, the items need to be carefully developed to ensure that each item “...contribute[s] in a meaningful way to the construct/concept being investigated” (Bond & Fox, 2001, p. 26).

In order for a good data-to-model fit, the items making up the measurement scale need to carefully target the varying levels of affirmativeness of the respondents. In other words, the measure should contain a range of more difficult and less difficult items, which ideally matches the range of person affirmativeness. It is important that the items of an instrument are well targeted with an appropriate range of item difficulties, as it allows for a more precise, fine-grained measurement and enables the Rasch model to form more reliable, stable estimates based on comprehensive, available data:

Now suppose the investigator did not provide enough steps along the pathway. The first consequence would be that the locations of the steps would be less precise. More good items give more precise locations than fewer good items. Because we do not have many steps to separate the varying levels of development... (Bond & Fox, 2001, p. 31).

Data to model test-of-fit statistics

The computer program RUMM 2030 (Rasch Unidimensional Measurement Models, RUMMLab, 2007) was used to conduct analyses of the data for each facet with the purpose of establishing the extent to which the data fit the Rasch model. RUMM produced several statistical outputs for the five data sets, each of which have a specific application, as is outlined below.

Category probability curves and the threshold map

The category probability curve for an item illustrates the probability a respondent with a specific person location score has of selecting each of the response categories. If an item is functioning as expected, respondents with a lower person location score should be more likely to select an easier or less affirmative response category; and respondents with a higher person location score should be more likely to select a harder or more affirmative response category. A category probability curve also visually displays the threshold locations for the item on the logit scale, where two adjacent curves (representing the response categories) intersect. The threshold locations should be ordered, with the thresholds for lower categories (Strongly Disagree and Disagree, for example) having a lower location score on the scale than those of higher categories (Disagree and Agree, for example). Where this is the case, it indicates that respondents have used the response categories in a consistent and logical manner. Like the category probability curve, the threshold map graphically presents the ordering of thresholds for each item and shows each of the threshold location scores on the logit scale. Examples of category probability curves for the first item of each facet and item maps are included in the analysis results presented in this chapter.

Item characteristic curve

The item characteristic curve displays the scores predicted by the Rasch model for a particular item. The observed scores for several class intervals of persons are plotted against the expected curve to visually depict how closely the observed scores reflect

the expected scores, and thus how well the item data fits the Rasch model. Where the observed scores do not match the expected values, the fit residual for the item will be high. In order for a good data-to-model fit, the residual for an item should be $< \pm 2.5$, the Rumm 2030 default value. Examples of item characteristic curves are included in the analysis results for the first item of each facet.

Individual item fit statistics

The individual fit statistics table presents an overview of the fit statistics for each item. As mentioned above, in order for an item to fit the model the residual should be low ($< \pm 2.5$). Additionally, the Chi Square probability value should be greater than 0.05. The individual item fit statistics also display the location score for each item. The location score indicates the difficulty of an item, that is, whether respondents found the item easier or more difficult to affirm. The lower the location score for an item, the easier the item was for respondents to affirm. Conversely, the higher the location score for an item, the more difficult it was for the respondents to affirm. Examples of individual item fit statistics tables are included in the analysis results.

Summary of test-of-fit statistics

The summary of test-of-fit statistics presents the overall fit of the data for persons and items to the model. In order for data to fit the model well, the mean of the person and item fit residual should be close to zero and the standard deviation close to 1.0 for both of the parameters (person and item). Item-trait interaction indicates how consistently respondents agreed upon the item difficulties. When data fits the model the item-trait interaction, a Chi Square probability should be greater than 0.05. The separation index is a reliability index, which indicates the distribution of respondents' location scores along the continuum. For data to fit the model well the separation index should be high or close to 1.0. Examples of summary of test-of-fit statistics tables are included in the results.

Person-item threshold distribution

The person-item threshold distribution chart graphically plots the item threshold locations, indicating item difficulty, on the same logit scale as the person location scores, which indicate person ability or affirmativeness. The distribution of person scores is displayed on the top of the scale and the item scores are shown below the scale. The items are plotted from easiest (on the left of the scale) to hardest (on the right of the scale) and the persons are likewise plotted from the least able or least affirmative (left), to the most able/affirmative respondents (right). The person-item threshold distribution graph shows how well the items targeted the respondents; that is, whether the items were too difficult or not difficult enough. Where there is a good range of item difficulties spread along the continuum, the measure is more precise or fine-grained. Examples of person-item threshold distribution charts are included in the analysis results.

Differential item functioning

Differential item functioning or DIF is present when certain groups of respondents within the sample respond significantly differently to an item. When this occurs, the item in question needs to be considered carefully, as it is showing bias towards particular respondents. For the study of middle leaders, three different groups or person factors were examined to see whether differential item functioning was present. The three person factors or demographic features relevant to this study were the type of middle leadership position a respondent held (i.e. a subject, program or pastoral leader), their years of experience in middle leadership and their gender.

Factor analysis of residuals

The analysis of residuals is a test for uni-dimensionality which, as noted previously, is a requirement for fit to the Rasch model. Uni-dimensionality can be tested by Principal Components Factor Analysis of the residuals after the Rasch measure has been extracted from the data. For a construct to be considered uni-dimensional, the strong loadings (>3.0) should be dispersed across the factors, rather than loaded on

one of the factors. Minimal structure will be present. Examples of factor analysis of residuals outputs are included in the analysis results.

Facet one: Role clarity

The first aspect of middle leader's role perceptions measured was role clarity. The facet of role clarity is a construct designed to measure the extent to which middle leaders perceived their role as being well-defined and appropriate in scope. The role clarity measure contained seven items.

Fit of data to the Rasch model

Category probability curve

The RUMM software produces Category Probability Curves, which indicate the probability of a respondent selecting a particular category for an item, based on their person location score. The person location score indicates a respondent's level of affirmativeness measured in logits. The response categories for these items, as for all items in the survey, use the following scale: Strongly Disagree (0), Disagree (1) Agree (2) and Strongly Agree (3). Bond and Fox (2001) explain:

Each category should have a distinct peak in the probability curve graph, illustrating that each is indeed the most probable response for some portion of the measured variable. Therefore, thresholds that are disordered or too close will show up visually, with flat probability curves, as being problematic (p. 163).

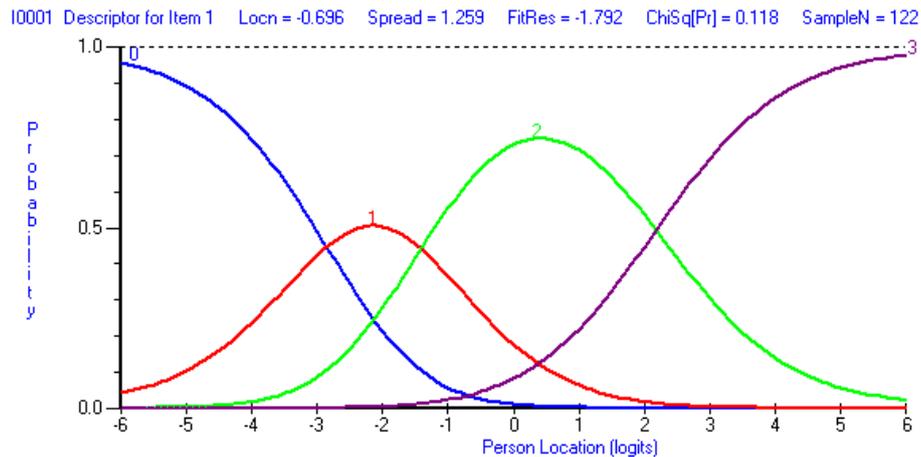


Figure 6.1 *Category Probability Curve for Item 1*

The category probability curve for Item 1 is displayed in Figure 6.1. Item 1 asked middle leaders to respond to the statement, “In the school there is an understanding of the main duties and expectations of my position”. For this item, the category probability curve shows that for the ‘Strongly Disagree’ (0) response category, the probability is 0.95 for middle leaders with a person location of -6.0 logits. The probability of middle leaders selecting this category decreases to 0 for middle leaders with a location of 0 logits. For the ‘Disagree’ (1) response category, middle leaders with a location of -2.0 logits have the highest probability of selecting the item, which reduces to a probability of 0 for middle leaders with a location of 2.5 logits. For the most affirmative category ‘Strong Agree’ (3), the probability is close to 1 for middle leaders with a high location of 6 logits. This indicates that, as would be expected, less affirmative middle leaders are more likely to select a lower response category and more affirmative middle leaders are more likely to select a higher response category.

The threshold location is the point on the scale where the category probability curves intersect. At this point, there is an equal probability that respondents with the same person location logit (that is, middle leaders who have the same level of affirmativeness) will select either of the two intersecting response categories. As is shown, the threshold location logit at the intersection of categories 0 and 1 is lower than the threshold location of categories 1 and 2, which in turn, is less than the threshold location of categories 2 and 3. This, along with the threshold map, which is discussed below, indicates that the thresholds for each of the three categories are

ordered for the facet of role clarity. Where the thresholds are ordered, this indicates that respondents have used the categories in a logical and consistent manner.

Threshold map

In addition to the category probability curve, the threshold map also indicates whether the four response categories for each item are correctly ordered and therefore function as would be expected. The threshold map for the facet of role clarity, as shown in Figure 6.2, indicates that the thresholds are ordered and the respondents have been consistent in their understanding and use of the four categories for each item measuring role clarity.

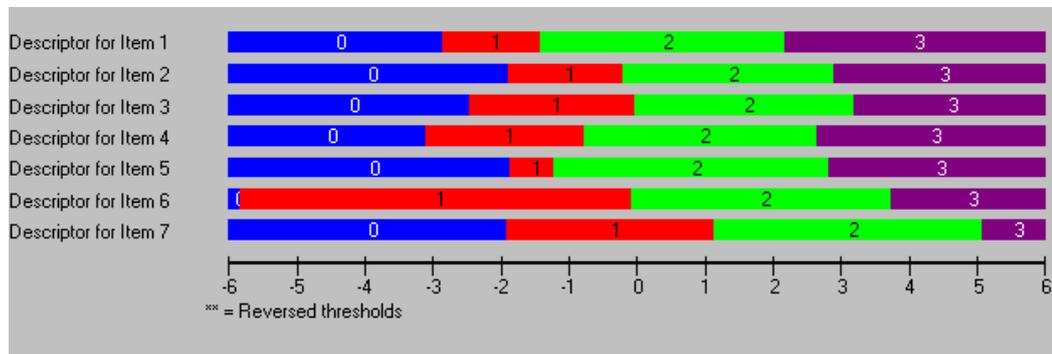


Figure 6.2 *Threshold Map for Items 1 to 7*

Item characteristic curve

The item characteristic curve for Item 1 is displayed in Figure 6.3. The curve shows the expected value for the item in relation to the person locations. RUMM then plots the observed scores for the item against the predicted response curve to indicate how close the observed scores fit the predicted values. The item characteristic curve for Item 1 shows that the observed scores fit the predicted scores well, with a fit residual of -1.79 for this item. A low residual ($< \pm 2.5$) indicates that the actual values for this item are close to the expected values predicted by the model, suggesting a good fit of the item data to the measurement model.

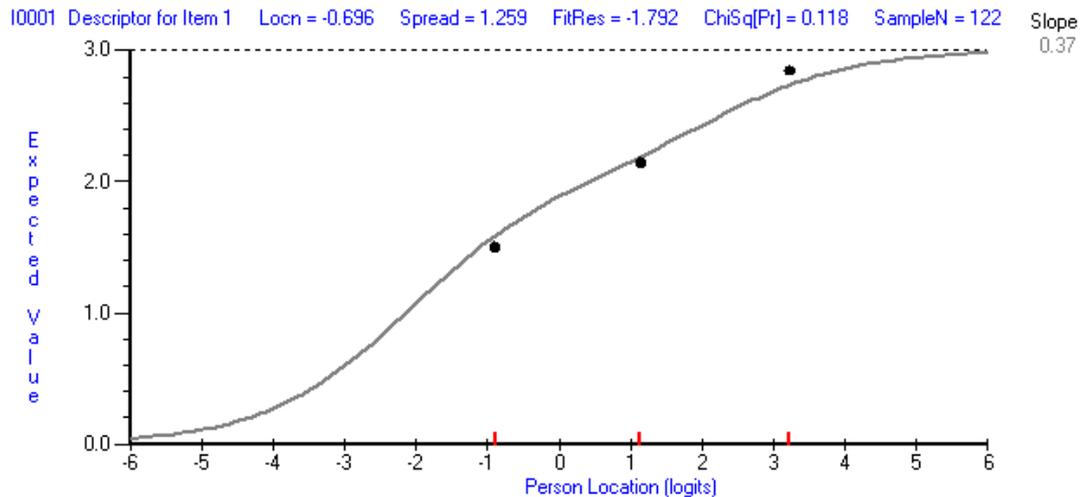


Figure 6.3 Item Characteristic Curve for Item 1

Individual item fit statistics

The item fit statistics generated by RUMM indicate how well the data from each item fits the model. For the data to better fit the model the residual should be low ($< \pm 2.5$). RUMM makes the Bonenferoni adjustment to determine an adjusted probability for each item. The individual item fit statistics for Items 1-7 measuring role clarity are displayed in the table below. As is shown in Table 6.1, the residual for each of the items meets the requirement of being $< \pm 2.5$ and the probability for each item is > 0.05 . This indicates that the data from the seven items measuring role clarity fit the measurement model well.

Table 6.1

Individual Item Fit Statistics for Items 1 to 7

Seq	Location	SE	Residual	DF	ChiSq	DF	Prob
1	-0.70	0.17	-1.79	100.83	4.28	2.00	0.12
2	0.26	0.15	1.81	101.67	5.08	2.00	0.08
3	0.22	0.16	-1.68	100.83	1.95	2.00	0.38
4	-0.42	0.17	1.77	101.67	2.14	2.00	0.34
5	-0.09	0.16	-0.39	101.67	0.28	2.00	0.87
6	-0.73	0.18	-0.06	101.67	1.33	2.00	0.51
7	1.44	0.17	-0.40	101.67	0.21	2.00	0.90

Summary of test-of-fit statistics

The summary of test-of-fit statistics for the facet of role clarity is displayed in Table 6.2. For the data to fit the model well, the mean of the fit residual should be close to zero and the standard deviation should be close to one. A negative fit statistic indicates a very close fit of the data to the model. As is shown in the table below, for role clarity the mean of the fit residual for the items was -0.11 with a standard deviation of 1.45. The mean of the fit residual for the persons (middle leaders) was -0.29 with a standard deviation of 1.02. These statistics indicate a good data-to-model fit. The item-trait interaction indicates how consistently the respondents agreed upon the difficulty of the items measuring role clarity. According to Waugh (2003), good item-trait test of fit means that:

...there was no significant interaction between the locations of the person measures along the trait and the responses to the items. That is, there is good agreement amongst the persons about the difficulties of items. Persons who have high measures agree with persons who have low measures that certain items are easy and that other items are hard (p. 96).

For the data to fit the model, the item-trait interaction should have a probability of >0.05. The total Chi Square probability for the seven role clarity items was 0.36. RUMM uses the Separation Index as a reliability index, which indicates the distribution of respondents' scores (person location logits) along the scale. Ideally, the separation index should be close to one, and for the role clarity scale the Separation Index was 0.86. Overall, the power of test-of-fit was excellent.

Table 6.2
Summary of Test-of-Fit Statistics for Role Clarity

ITEMS	PERSONS			
	Location	Fit Residual		
Mean	0	-0.11		
SD	0.75	1.45		
Correlation		0		
Complete Data DF =		0.83		
ITEM-TRAIT INTERACTION RELIABILITY INDICES				
Total Item Chi Squ	15.26	Separation Index	0.86	
Total Deg of Freedom	14			
Total Chi Squ Prob	0.36			

LIKELIHOOD-RATIO TEST POWER OF TEST-OF-FIT

Chi Squ

Degrees of Freedom

Probability

Power is EXCELLENT

[Based on SepIndex of 0.86]

Person item threshold distribution

The person item threshold distribution chart plots the person location logits, indicating the middle leaders' level of affirmativeness (top) on the same scale as the item thresholds (bottom), to indicate the relative level of item difficulty. The person item threshold distribution chart for role clarity is displayed in Figure 6.4. It indicates that the distribution of item thresholds matched the distribution of middle leaders' scores at the lower end of the distribution (that is, the easier items to affirm). The scale could, however, be improved by including more difficult or harder-to-affirm items at the higher end of the scale. As can be seen, the highest item threshold location did not meet the highest person location scores at the top of the scale. Overall the range of item thresholds reflected the distribution of middle leaders' scores quite well.

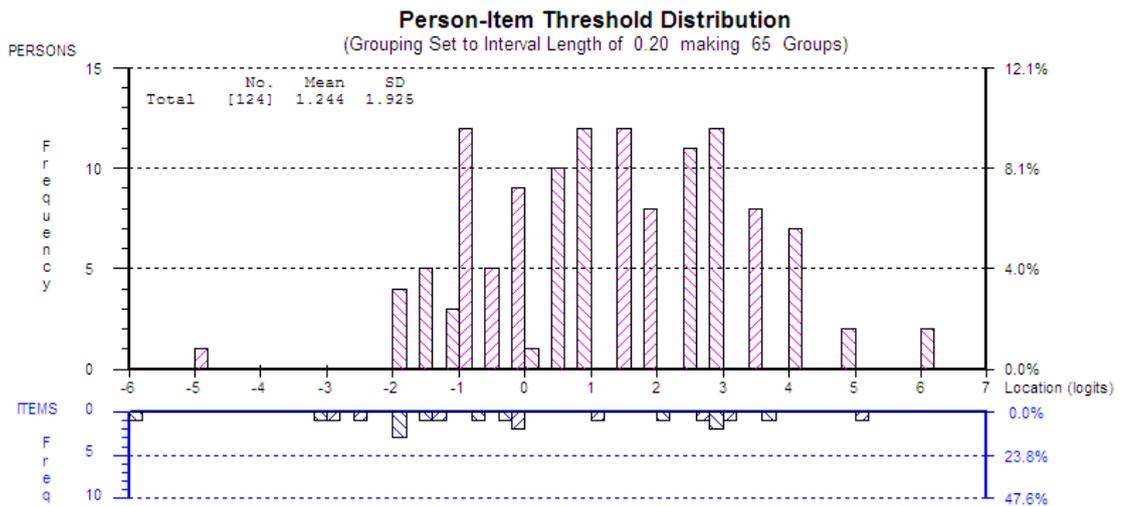
Figure 6.4 *Person-Item Threshold Distribution for Role Clarity****Differential item functioning***

Figure 6.5 shows the Item Characteristic Curve for Item 1 and examines possible differential item functioning based on the person factor of position type (i.e.,

pastoral, program and subject), the observed scores for the three different types of positions are plotted. This shows that based on the person factor of position type, no differential item functioning is present for this item. The observed values are similar.

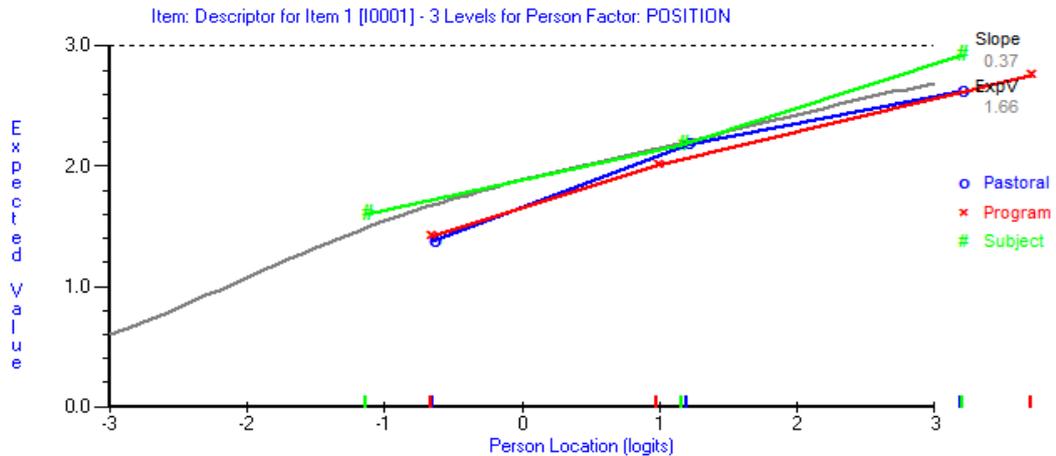


Figure 6.5 Differential item functioning test for Item 1 showing no DIF

In contrast, Figure 6.6 below shows the Item Characteristic Curve for Item 6, which, shows evidence of differential item functioning based on the respondents' position type. It is visually apparent on the graph that respondents who held a pastoral middle leadership position scored lower than the other two types of leaders. The stem statement for Item 6 is "There is a shared and consistent understanding of my role within the school". Thus, pastoral leaders were consistently less affirmative for this item, as compared to subject or program middle leaders.

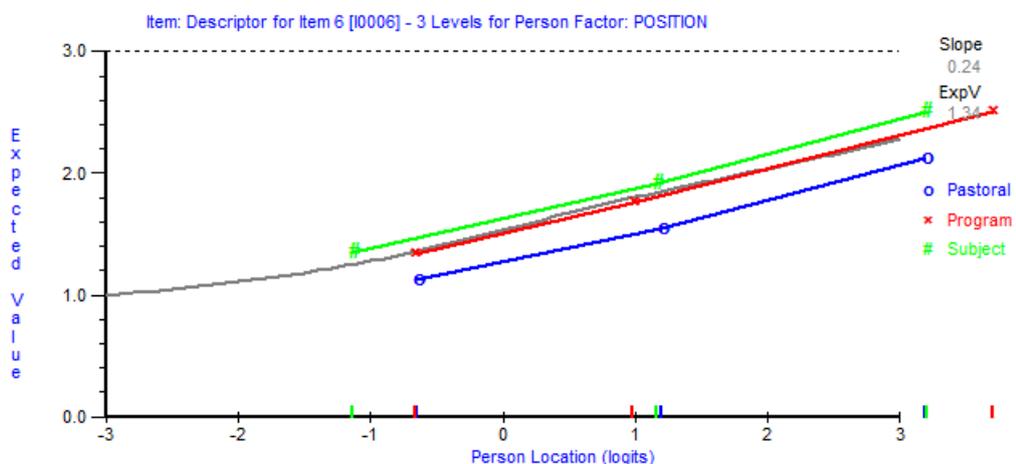


Figure 6.6 Differential item functioning test for Item 6 showing DIF

For the facet of role clarity, the differential item functioning identified by the RUMM program was only present for Item 6. However, no other items for the facet

of role clarity showed evidence of differential item functioning for any of the three person factors.

Factor analysis of residuals

In order for data to fit the Rasch model, one of the requirements of the model is uni-dimensionality. For an instrument to be uni-dimensional it should measure only one trait and the individual items should suggest a single construct. The common trait or construct being measured by Items 1-7 of the survey instrument is role clarity. Uni-dimensionality can be tested by Principal Components Factor Analysis of the residuals after the Rasch measure has been extracted from the data. If the data are uni-dimensional, the high loadings (>0.3) should be distributed across the factors and minimal structure should be present. The principal component factor loadings for role clarity are presented in the table below and the strong loadings have been bolded. Table 6.3 shows that some structure is present within the residuals. Two items are strongly loaded on both the first and second factors, which indicates that the construct is not completely uni-dimensional.

Table 6.3
Principal Components Loadings for Role Clarity

Item	PC1	PC2	PC3	PC4	PC5	PC6	PC7
I0001	-0.52	-0.30	-0.39	-0.41	0.54	-0.13	0.03
I0002	0.84	-0.10	0.04	0.00	0.24	0.47	0.05
I0003	0.71	-0.19	-0.31	-0.17	-0.35	-0.46	0.04
I0004	-0.25	0.67	0.50	-0.48	-0.12	-0.04	0.05
I0005	-0.17	0.63	-0.39	0.62	0.12	-0.10	0.04
I0006	-0.66	-0.32	-0.28	0.01	-0.52	0.33	0.04
I0007	-0.23	-0.55	0.64	0.43	0.09	-0.22	0.04

Item affirmativeness

The item difficulty locations for each of the seven items measuring the facet of role clarity are displayed in Table 6.4. The location scores for each item indicate how difficult each item was for the middle leaders to affirm. The items with a higher location score were harder to affirm than items with a lower location score.

Table 6.4

Item Affirmativeness table for Role Clarity

Item Number	Item Statement	Location (Logits)	Rank from easiest to hardest
1	In the school there is an understanding of the main duties and expectations of my position	-0.70	2
2	The duties and expectations of my position are documented in a written position description.	0.26	6
3	My position duties and expectations are clearly defined.	0.22	5
4	My role is clearly delineated from other leadership positions.	-0.42	3
5	The responsibilities of my position are appropriate in scope.	-0.09	4
6	There is a shared and consistent understanding of my role within the school.	-0.73	1
7	There is a deep and detailed understanding of the role throughout the school community.	1.44	7

For the facet of role clarity, the easiest item to affirm was Item 6, which has a location score of -0.73 logits. Item 6 asked the middle leaders to respond to the statement, “There is a shared and consistent understanding of my role in the school”. Item 1 was the second easiest item for middle leaders to affirm and, with a location score of -0.70 logits, it was similar in difficulty to Item 6. Item 1 asked middle leaders to respond to the statement, “In the school there is an understanding of the main duties and expectations of my position”. Middle leaders had greater difficulty affirming Item 4 (location -0.42 logits) “My role is clearly delineated from other leadership position”, and Item 5 (location -0.09 logits) “The responsibilities of my position are appropriate in scope”.

Items 3, 2 and 7 respectively were at the more difficult end of the scale for the facet role clarity. Item 3, “My position duties and expectations are clearly defined” had a location score of 0.22 logits. Item 2 was similarly difficult with a location score of 0.26 logits and required middle leaders to affirm the statement, “The duties and expectations of my position are documented in a written position description”. Clearly the hardest item to affirm was Item 7: “There is deep and detailed understanding of the role throughout the school community” (location 1.44 logits). The location scores indicate that for the facet of role clarity, the items are not hierarchically ordered in increasing level of difficulty.

Facet two: Role authority

The second facet of middle leadership role perceptions measured by the survey instrument was role authority. The seven items of this construct were developed to measure the level of authority middle leaders felt their position afforded them at a department and whole-school level. The items asked middle leaders to rate: their perceptions about the opportunities they had within their school to voice their opinion and offer ideas; the degree to which they perceived their ideas were adopted by the school; and the authority they had to make changes and decisions which affected their colleagues.

Fit of data to the Rasch model

Category probability curve

The category probability curve for Item 8 is displayed in Figure 6.7. For this item, middle leaders were asked to respond to the statement: “There are opportunities for me to contribute to whole school planning and decision-making”. The category probability curve shows that for the ‘Strongly Disagree’ (0) response category the probability is 0.75 for middle leaders with a person location of -9.0 logits. The probability decreased to zero for middle leaders with a person location of -3.5 logits. The probability of a middle leader selecting the ‘Disagree’ (1) response categories is 0.9 for respondents with a location of -5.0 logits. Probability diminishes to zero for middle leaders with a person location score of greater than 2.0 logits. This indicates that for Item 8, the probability of middle leaders selecting a more affirmative response category increases relative to their degree of affirmativeness on the person location scale.

The threshold between categories 0 (strongly disagree) and 1 (disagree) was quite low at -8.0 logits on the person location scale. The threshold between categories 1 (disagree) and 2 (agree) was higher at close to -2.0 logits; and the threshold location of response categories 2 (agree) and 3 (strongly agree) was just above 3.0 logits. In other words, middle leaders with higher levels of affirmativeness used the higher response categories when responding to this item. The category probability curve

therefore shows that the threshold locations are clearly ordered for Item 8, and thus that the categories were used logically by respondents.

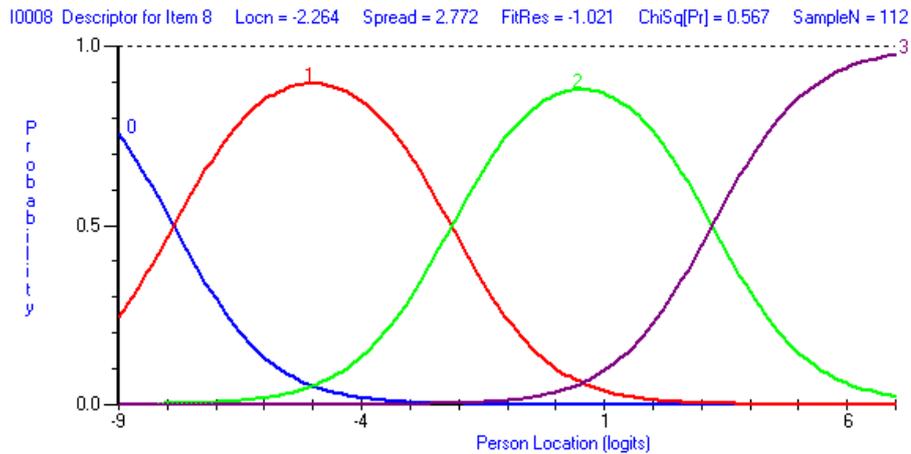


Figure 6.7 *Category Probability Curve for Item 8*

Threshold map

The threshold map for Items 8 to 14 is displayed in Figure 6.8. The threshold locations for all seven items measuring role authority can be seen in the threshold map. The threshold map shows that the threshold locations for each of the response categories were ordered for all of the seven items measuring the facet of role authority. Thus, the response categories were used logically by respondents and functioned as expected.

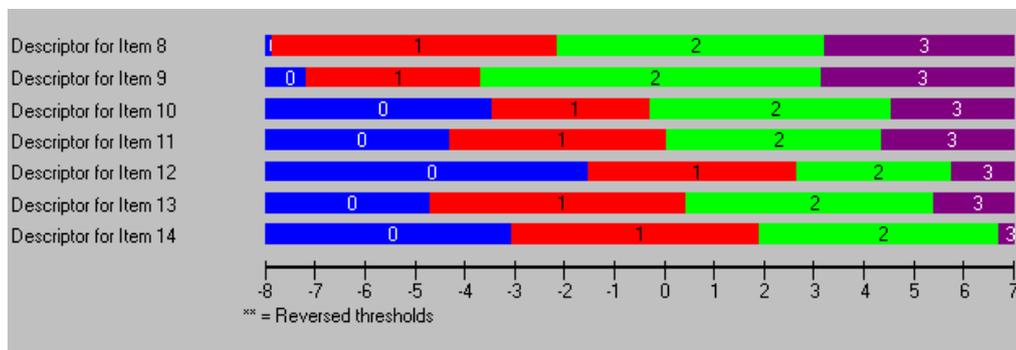


Figure 6.8 *Threshold Map for Items 8 to 14*

Item characteristic curve

The graphic in Figure 6.9 illustrates the item characteristic curve for Item 8: “There are opportunities for me to contribute to whole school planning and decision-making”. The item characteristic curve shows that there is a close fit when the observed scores are plotted against the expected values for this item. The close fit of the observed score to the predicted scores is reflected in the fit residual for Item 8 of -1.02 ($< \pm 2.5$).

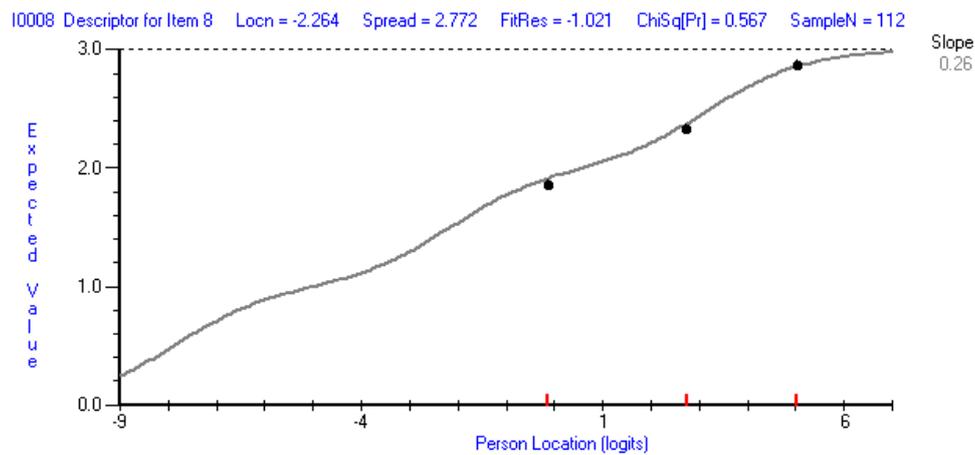


Figure 6.9 *Item Characteristic Curve for Item 8*

Individual item fit statistics

The individual fit statistics for each of the seven items measuring role authority are displayed in Table 6.5. The residual for Items 8 to 14 are low ($< \pm 2.5$) which indicates a good fit to the measurement model. The majority of items, except Item 11, had a probability of > 0.05 which indicates that data from these items fit the model well.

Table 6.5

Individual Item Fit Statistics for Items 8 to 14

Seq	Location	SE	Residual	DF	ChiSq	DF	Prob
8	-2.26	0.23	-1.02	92.90	1.14	2	0.57
9	-2.57	0.24	-1.45	92.90	2.98	2	0.23
10	0.28	0.21	1.75	92.07	0.95	2	0.62
11	0.03	0.21	-1.70	90.41	7.33	2	0.03
12	2.29	0.18	0.48	91.24	0.92	2	0.63
13	0.38	0.22	-0.75	91.24	0.71	2	0.70
14	1.85	0.21	-0.36	91.24	4.76	2	0.09

Summary of test-of-fit statistics

The summary of test-of-fit statistics for the facet of role authority are presented in Table 6.6. The item-person interaction statistics indicate how well the data for the seven items measuring role authority (Items 8 to 14) fit the Rasch measurement model. The fit residuals for the both item and person parameters are low at -0.44 and -0.40 respectively. The standard deviation of the item fit residual is 1.20 and 0.93 for the person fit residual, which are both close to the ideal standard deviation of 1.0. These statistics indicate that the data closely fit the measurement model. The item-trait interaction statistics show that total Chi Square probability is 0.17, which meets the model requirement of probability being more than 0.05. Additionally, the separation index of 0.88 is close to the ideal of 1.0. Overall the data for the items measuring role authority had an excellent fit to the measurement model.

Table 6.6

Summary of Test-of-Fit Statistics for Role Authority

ITEM-PERSON INTERACTION				
ITEMS			PERSONS	
	Location	Fit Residual	Location	Fit Residual
Mean	0	-0.44	3.04	-0.40
SD	1.85	1.20	2.63	0.93
Correlation		0		0.06
Complete Data DF =	0.83			

ITEM-TRAIT INTERACTION		RELIABILITY INDICES	
Total Item Chi Squ	18.78	Separation Index	0.88
Total Deg of Freedom	14	Cronbach Alpha	N/A
Total Chi Squ Prob	0.17		

LIKELIHOOD-RATIO TEST		POWER OF TEST-OF-FIT	
Chi Squ		Power is Excellent	
Degrees of Freedom		[Based of SepIndex of 0.88]	
Probability			

Person-item threshold distribution

The person-item threshold distribution scale for role authority (Figure 6.10) shows the range of person locations for Items 8 to 14 (top), as compared with the range of item threshold locations (bottom). The person and item threshold locations are plotted on the same scale (location logits) to allow item difficulty to be measured against person ability (in this case a middle leader's level of affirmativeness). The person-item threshold distribution shows that at the lower end of the scale the distribution of item thresholds covered the distribution of middle leader's scores. However, four of the item threshold locations were targeted at below -0.4 logits, whereas the lowest person location score was greater than -0.4 logits. This suggests that these items, in particular items 8 and 9, were too easy for the middle leaders when compared to their person locations (level of affirmativeness). At the high end of the scale, the distribution of item thresholds does not match the person location scores. There were ten middle leaders who had a person location score of more than 7 logits above the zero point, whereas the highest item threshold was less than 7 logits. This indicates that the measure for role authority could be improved by including items at the highest end of the scale which are more difficult to affirm. Overall, the items targeted the range of middle leaders' levels of affirmativeness quite well, especially those middle leaders within the average range of person location scores. However, the items were not 'difficult' enough at the higher end of the continuum.

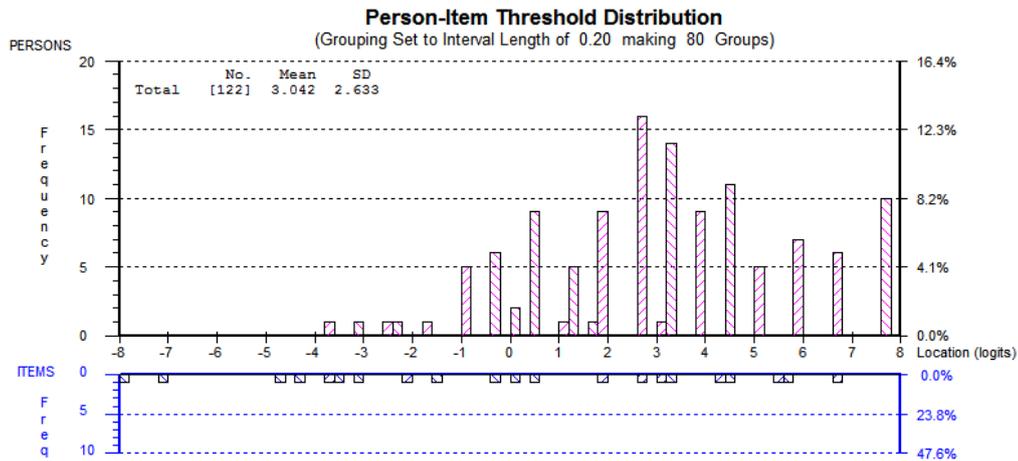


Figure 6.10 *Person-Item Threshold Distribution for Role Authority*

Differential item functioning

There was no differential item functioning for the seven items measuring the facet of role authority. The person factors did not significantly affect middle leaders' responses to these items.

Factor analysis of residuals

The construct of role authority was tested for uni-dimensionality using Principal Components Factor Analysis. Table 6.7 indicates that there is some structure present, with four items strongly loaded (>0.3) on the first factor and two items loaded on the second factor. This indicates that the construct of role authority is multi-dimensional.

Table 6.7

Principal Components Loadings for Role Authority

Item	PC1	PC2	PC3	PC4	PC5	PC6	PC7
I0008	0.69	-0.17	-0.35	0.01	-0.32	-0.52	0.02
I0009	0.49	-0.57	-0.38	0.02	0.05	0.53	0.02
I0010	0.32	0.04	0.91	-0.17	-0.18	0.10	0.03
I0011	0.47	0.60	-0.08	0.26	0.58	-0.02	0.02
I0012	-0.53	0.55	-0.43	-0.38	-0.26	0.15	0.03
I0013	-0.57	-0.54	0.03	-0.32	0.46	-0.26	0.03
I0014	-0.61	-0.13	0.05	0.76	-0.17	-0.01	0.03

Item affirmativeness

The location scores for Items 8 to 14 relating to the facet of role authority are displayed in Table 6.8. The location scores indicate the relative difficulty of each item. Those items with a lower location score were easier for middle leaders to affirm and those items with a higher location score were more difficult to affirm.

Table 6.8

Item Affirmativeness table for Role Authority

Item Number	Item Statement	Location (Logits)	Rank from easiest to hardest
8	There are opportunities for me to contribute to whole school planning and decision-making.	-2.26	2
9	There are opportunities for me to voice concerns about school issues.	-2.57	1
10	I have the authority to make decisions which affect my colleagues.	0.28	4
11	I am regularly involved in planning or decision-making at the whole-school level.	0.03	3
12	I am consulted by the schools' senior leaders about all important whole-school decisions or plans.	2.29	7
13	My ideas and opinions are taken into account.	0.38	5
14	I play an influential role in whole-school development.	1.85	6

The item location scores for the facet of role authority ranged from -2.57 to 2.29 logits, which shows a good overall spread of item difficulty for this facet. For the facet of role authority the easiest item for middle leaders to affirm was Item 9. The statement for Item 9 is “There are opportunities for me to voice concerns about school issues”. With a low item location score of -2.57 logits, even less affirmative middle leaders would find it easy to agree with this item. Item 8 is close to Item 9 in its level of difficulty with a low location score of -2.26 logits. Item 8 required middle leaders to respond to the statement, “There are opportunities for me to contribute to whole school planning and decision-making”.

Items 11, 10 and 13 were the next easiest to affirm items for the facet of role authority, respectively. Item 11, “I am regularly involved in planning of decision making at the whole-school level”, has a location score of 0.03 logits. Item 10 was slightly harder for middle leaders to affirm, with a higher location score of 0.28 logits. Item 10 asked middle leaders to respond to the statement, “I have the

authority to make decisions which affect my colleagues”. Item 13, “My ideas and opinions are taken into account” (location 0.38 logits), was harder still for middle leaders to affirm. The hardest items for middle leaders to affirm were Item 14 (location 1.85 logits) and Item 12 (location 2.29 logits). The statement for Item 14 was, “I play an influential role in whole-school development” Item 12 was the hardest of the seven items for the facet of role authority. Item 12 asked the middle leaders to respond to the statement, “I am consulted by the school’s senior leaders about all important whole-school decisions or plans”. Only more affirmative middle leaders with a higher person location score were able to agree with this statement.

Facet three: Role support

Role support is the third facet measured by the survey and contains nine items. This facet was designed to measure the perceptions of middle leaders relating to the perceived level of support provided to them by their school and colleagues. Middle leaders were asked to comment on the position-specific training offered to them, as well as the amount of time, resources and professional support they had been given in order to perform their middle leadership role.

Fit of data to the Rasch model

Category probability curve

The category probability curve for Item 15 is displayed in Figure 6.11. Item 15 required middle leaders to respond to the statement, “I have been provided with additional non-teaching time to fulfil my role”. The category probability curve shows that whilst the categories are correctly ordered for this item, the thresholds for 0:1 and 1:2 are quite close. The threshold between categories 0 and 1 lies just below -0.2 logits on the location scale, and the threshold between categories 1 and 2 lies marginally above the -0.2 logits. Middle leaders with a location score close to -0.2 logits have a similar probability of selecting the strongly disagree, disagree or agree response options. Bond and Fox (2001) explain that:

The magnitude of the distance between the threshold estimates also are important. Threshold distances should indicate that each step defines a distinct position on the variable. That is, the estimates should be neither too close together nor too far apart on the logit scale. Guidelines indicate that the thresholds should increase by at least 1.4 logits, to show distinction between categories, but not more than 5 logits, so as to avoid large gaps in the variable (p. 163).

This item is not functioning as well as would be expected, as the data indicate that respondents did not agree on the difficulty of the item. A possible reason for this is that the statement for Item 15 invited a dichotomous response of yes/no or true/false, rather than the option of four response categories.

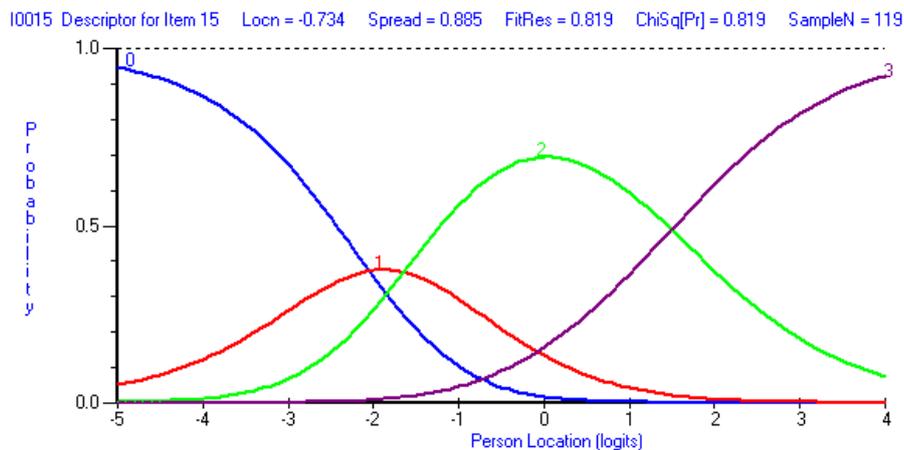


Figure 6.11 *Category Probability Curve for item 15*

Threshold map

Figure 6.12, the threshold map for Items 15 to 23, displays the three threshold locations for each of the nine items measuring the facet of role support. The graph shows that the thresholds for each of the items are ordered correctly. This indicates that the middle leaders were logical in their use of the response categories, with more affirmative middle leaders selecting the higher response categories and less affirmative middle leaders selecting a lower response category.

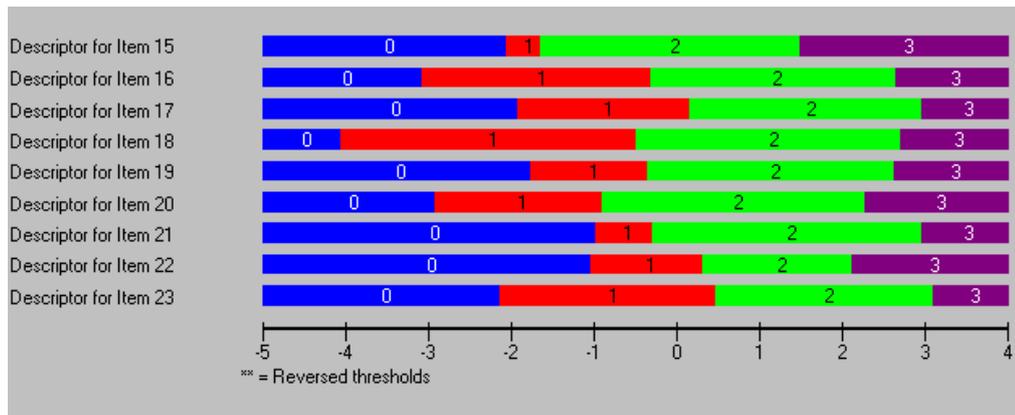


Figure 6.12 *Threshold Map for Items 15 to 23*

Item characteristic curve

The item characteristic curve for Item 15 is shown in Figure 6.13. The item characteristic curve shows that the observed scores for the three class intervals closely fit the expected values for this item. This indicates that the data for this item fit the model well, as is also reflected in the low item fit residual of 0.81.

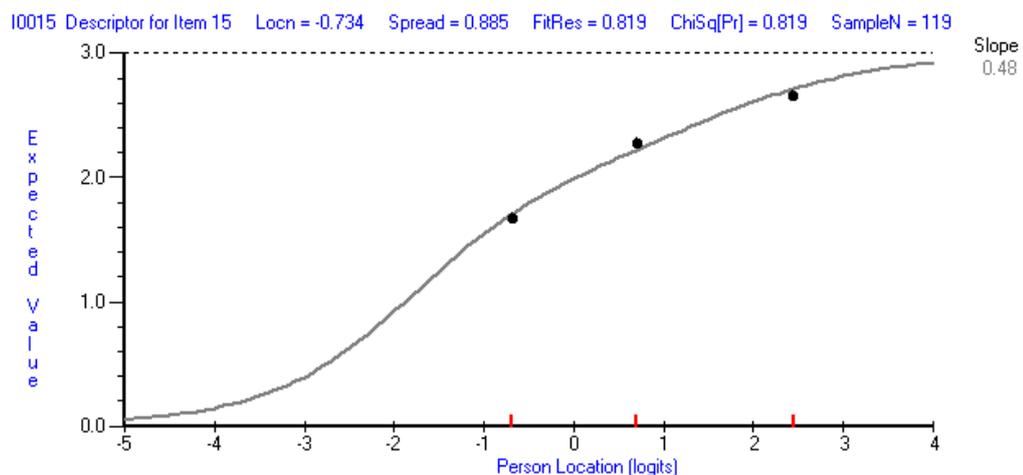


Figure 6.13 *Item Characteristic Curve for Item 15*

Individual item fit statistics

The individual item fit statistics for all nine items measuring role authority are displayed in Table 6.9. The residual for all nine items are $< \pm 2.5$ and probability for the items is > 0.05 , which indicates a good data-to-model fit for each of these items.

Table 6.9
Individual Item Fit Statistics for Items 15 to 23

Seq	Location	SE	Residual	DF	ChiSq	DF	Prob
15	-0.73	0.16	0.82	102.77	0.40	2	0.82
16	-0.25	0.16	-0.98	102.77	2.37	2	0.31
17	0.41	0.15	-0.29	101.90	2.75	2	0.25
18	-0.61	0.17	-0.17	102.77	0.50	2	0.78
19	0.17	0.15	0.26	101.04	1.12	2	0.57
20	-0.51	0.16	-0.56	101.90	0.83	2	0.66
21	0.57	0.14	1.64	101.04	1.94	2	0.38
22	0.47	0.13	1.23	101.90	4.94	2	0.08
23	0.48	0.15	-1.05	101.90	1.16	2	0.56

Summary of test-of-fit statistics

The item-person interaction for the nine items measuring role support are displayed in the summary of test-of-fit statistics in Table 6.10. The mean of the item fit residual is 0.1 and the mean of the person fit residual is -0.31, both of which are close to zero as required by the Rasch model. The item fit residual standard deviation is 0.96 and the person fit residual standard deviation is 1.27, both of which indicate a good distribution. The item-trait Chi Square probability of 0.59 (>0.05) and the separation index of 0.85 suggest the data for items 15-23 have a good overall fit to the model.

Table 6.10
Summary of Test-of-Fit Statistics for Role Support

ITEM-PERSON INTERACTION				
	ITEMS		PERSONS	
	Location	Fit Residual	Location	Fit Residual
Mean	0	0.1	0.86	-0.31
SD	0.53	0.96	1.56	1.27
Correlation		0.09		0.04
Complete Data DF =		0.86		
ITEM-TRAIT INTERACTION			RELIABILITY INDICES	
Total Item Chi Squ		16.01	Separation Index	0.85
Total Deg of Freedom		18		
Total Chi Squ Prob		0.59		

LIKELIHOOD-RATIO TEST	POWER OF TEST-OF-FIT
Chi Squ	Power is GOOD
Degrees of Freedom	[Based on SepIndex of 0.85]
Probability	

Person-item threshold distribution

The person-item threshold distribution for the nine items measuring role support is displayed below in Figure 6.14. The graph shows that the level of item difficulty was well targeted at the lower end of the scale. The least affirmative respondent had a person location of -3.0 logits and there were two item threshold locations below this point on the scale. At the top end of the scale, however, the highest item threshold location on the scale had a value of 3.0 logits. On the other hand, twelve middle leaders in the sample had a person location score greater than 3.0 logits. Thus, the most difficult item on the scale with a threshold location of 3.0 logits was not difficult enough for middle leaders with higher person location scores. This indicates that for the facet of role support, the items were too easy at the high end of the scale and the instrument could be refined by including items which are more difficult for middle leaders with a high location score to affirm.

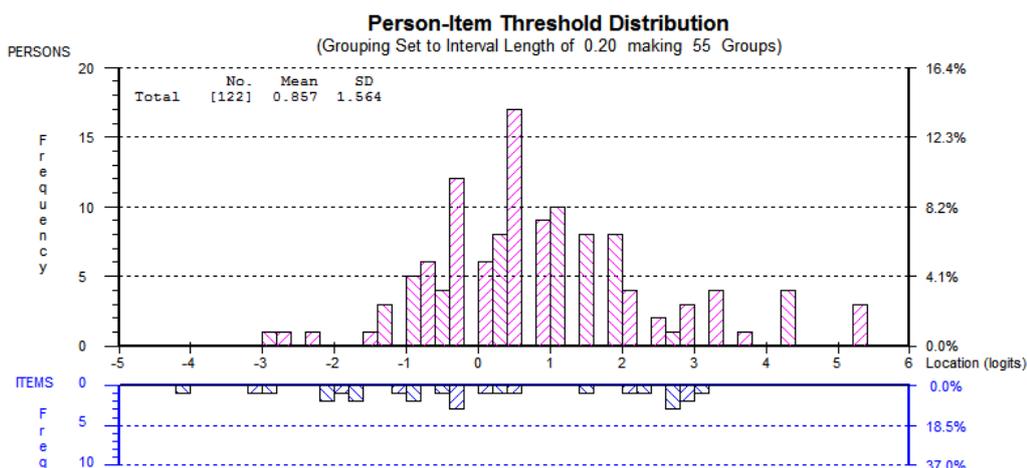


Figure 6.14 *Person-Item Threshold Distribution for Role Support*

Differential item functioning

There is no differential item functioning present due to differences in position, years of experience or gender for the role support items.

Factor analysis of residuals

The factor analysis of residuals for Items 15 to 23 is displayed in Table 6.11. The strong loadings (>0.3) have been highlighted in bold and the table shows some structure is present. This indicates that the data for role support is not completely uni-dimensional. Multiple loadings are present for two items on factors 1 and 5; however, overall the higher loadings are distributed across several factors.

Table 6.11

Principal Components Loadings for Role Support

Item	PC1	PC2	PC3	PC4	PC5	PC6	PC7	PC8	PC9
I0015	0.58	-0.46	0.02	-0.13	0.04	0.55	0.26	-0.26	0.00
I0016	0.33	0.21	0.62	-0.09	0.60	-0.30	0.10	0.03	0.00
I0017	-0.22	0.36	-0.37	0.71	0.33	0.14	-0.14	-0.19	0.00
I0018	-0.72	-0.29	0.11	0.22	-0.01	0.14	0.42	0.38	0.00
I0019	-0.61	-0.18	0.56	0.00	-0.35	-0.06	-0.27	-0.30	0.00
I0020	-0.15	0.64	-0.01	-0.48	0.02	0.46	-0.28	0.23	0.00
I0021	-0.27	-0.41	-0.61	-0.47	0.20	-0.35	-0.07	-0.05	0.00
I0022	0.74	-0.24	-0.02	0.31	-0.31	-0.15	-0.28	0.31	0.00
I0023	0.18	0.71	-0.15	-0.06	-0.43	-0.25	0.42	-0.13	0.00

Item affirmativeness

The location score for Items 15 to 23 measuring the facet of role support are displayed in Table 6.12. The location scores for each of the items indicate how difficult each item was for middle leaders to affirm.

Table 6.12

Item Affirmativeness table for Role Support

Item Number	Item Statement	Location (Logits)	Rank from easiest to hardest
15	I have been provided with additional non-teaching time to fulfil my role.	-0.73	1
16	I have been provided with the resources required for me to fulfil my professional responsibilities.	-0.25	4
17	I have been provided with adequate training.	0.41	6
18	I have been provided with ongoing professional learning opportunities.	-0.61	2
19	The professional learning I have undertaken has been relevant and specific to my work as a middle leader.	0.17	5
20	I am well supported in my role.	-0.51	3
21	I receive an appropriate program budget.	0.57	9
22	I receive an appropriate allotment of non-teaching time.	0.47	7
23	I am provided with optimal, high quality professional support.	0.48	8

Item 15 with a location score of -0.73 logits was the easiest item for the middle leaders to affirm. This item asked middle leaders to respond to the statement, “I have been provided with additional non-teaching time to fulfil my role”. Even middle leaders with comparatively low levels of affirmativeness would have been able to agree with this statement. Item 18, “I have been provided with ongoing professional learning opportunities”, was the second easiest item for the facet of role support, with a location score of -0.61 logits. As with Item 15, even those middle leaders with lower person location scores were able to affirm the statement for Item 18. Items 20 and 16 also had negative location scores, indicating that they were relatively easy items for middle leaders to affirm. Item 20 (location -0.51 logits) asked middle leaders to respond to the statement, “I am well supported in my role”. Item 16 (location -0.25 logits) posed the statement, “I have been provided with the resources required for me to fulfil my professional responsibilities”.

Items 19, 17, 22 and 23 provided statements that were harder for middle leaders to affirm. Item 19, with the statement “The professional learning I have undertaken has been relevant and specific to my work as a middle leader” had a location score of 0.17 logits; Item 17, with the statement “I have been provided with adequate training”, had a slightly high location score of 0.41 logits. The statements for Items

22 and 23 were harder still for middle leaders to affirm. Item 22 had a location score of 0.47 logits and posed the statement “I receive an appropriate allotment of non-teaching time”. Item 23, “I am provided with optimal, high quality professional support”, was the second most difficult item for the facet of role clarity, with a location score of 0.48 logits.

The most difficult item for middle leaders to affirm was Item 21, with a location score of 0.57. Item 21 asked middle leaders to respond to the statement, “I receive an appropriate program budget”. Middle leaders required a comparatively high person location score to be able to affirm this statement. It is noticeable that the location scores at the higher end of the range, that is the more difficult items, are quite close in range. Items 17, 21, 22 and 23 all have a location score of between 0.41 and 0.57 logits, indicating that these questions were of similar difficulty. Ideally the location scores for the items would have a wider range in order to more accurately target the possible range of middle leaders’ scores, as was discussed previously in the examination of the person-item distribution graph for role support.

Facet four: Role value

Role value is the fourth in the instrument. The role value items were designed to measure the extent to which middle leaders perceive their role as being valued by their school and colleagues. Included in this construct were seven items relating to the perceived worth of the position, as well as the level of recognition and acknowledgement their role as a middle leader is given within the school.

Fit of data to the Rasch model

Category probability curve

The category probability curve for Item 24, the first item measuring role value, is displayed in Figure 6.15. As can be seen, the threshold locations for this item are reversed, that is, they do not function as would be expected. In this instance the threshold location for the strongly disagree (0) and disagree (1) categories is significantly higher at -2.5 logits on the person location scale, than the threshold

location for the disagree (1) and agree (2) categories at below -6.0 logits. The threshold location for the agree (2) and strongly agree (3) response categories is higher at just over 1.0 logit above the zero point on the person location scale. For Item 24 (“I believe that my role is worthwhile”) none of the respondents selected the ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ categories. Thus, no data were recorded for these two categories, making the estimates for this item unreliable. According to Bond and Fox (2001, p. 162), “categories with low frequencies also are problematic because they do not provide enough observations for an estimation of stable threshold values. Such infrequently used categories often indicate unnecessary or redundant categories”.

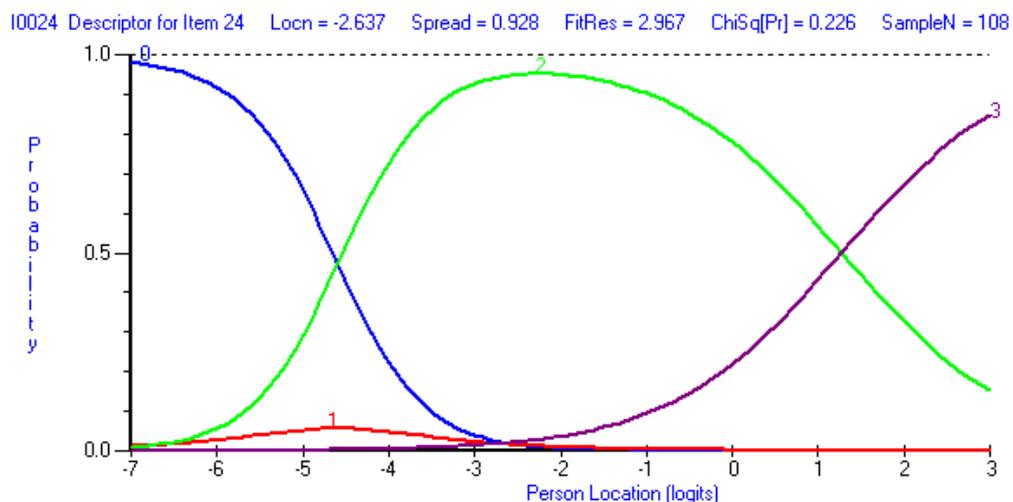


Figure 6.15 *Category Probability Curve for Item 24*

Threshold map

The threshold map for Items 24 to 30 is displayed in Figure 6.16. As was discussed above, the thresholds for Item 24 were reversed, as were the thresholds for Item 25. As for Item 24, none of the respondents selected the 0 or 1 response categories for Item 25, “I see my role as being beneficial to the day-to-day functioning of my school”, and thus no data were available for both of these categories. The reversed thresholds suggested that these two items did not function as expected and the data from these items needs to be treated with caution when undertaking an analysis, as they are not as accurate as from data from items that fitted better. The thresholds of

the remaining five items were, however, correctly ordered, suggesting that the respondents used the categories consistently for these items.

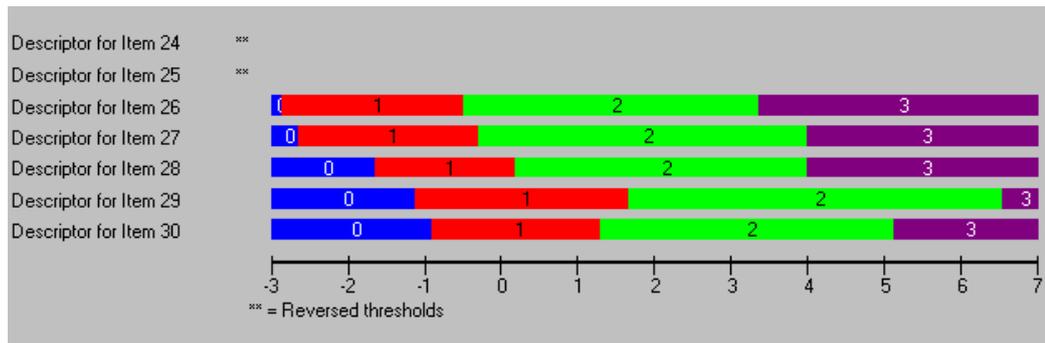


Figure 6.16 *Threshold Map for Items 24 to 30*

Item characteristic curve

The item characteristic curve for Item 24, in Figure 6.17, visually shows that the data fit for this item. Although the observed scores appear to soundly reflect the expected values for this item, overall the item has quite a high fit residual of 2.96. A lower fit residual of $< \pm 2.5$ is required for a better fit to the measurement model.

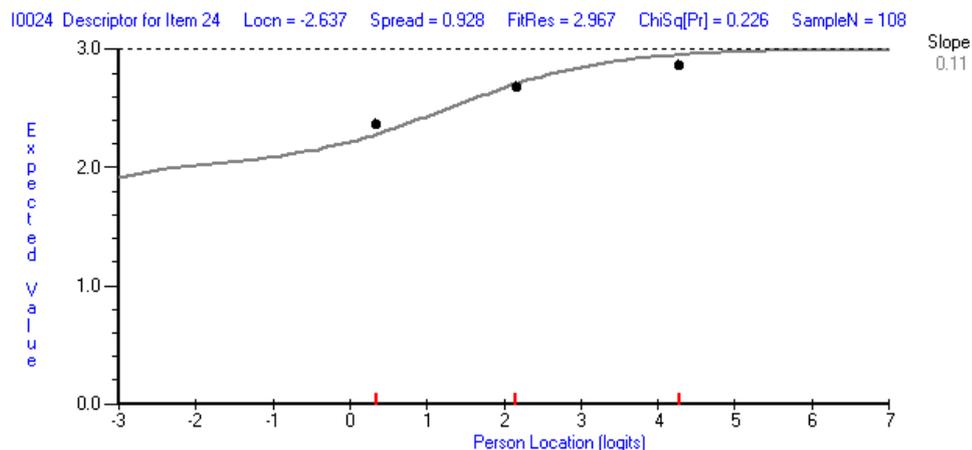


Figure 6.17 *Item Characteristic Curve for Item 24*

Individual item fit statistics

The individual item fit statistics for Items 24 to 30 are displayed in Table 6.13 below. As mentioned, the residual for Item 24 was greater than ± 2.5 , which indicates a poor fit to the model. Additionally, the probability value for Item 25 is less than

0.05, which suggests that the data for this item also does not fit the measurement model well. As noted above, these two items also had reversed thresholds. If the instrument were to be refined, Items 24 and 25 could be discarded, because they do not fit the model very closely. Caution should be exercised when using data from the items. The individual fit statistics for remaining Items 26 to 29 suggest that the data from these four items did fit the model well. The residuals for each of these items is low ($< \pm 2.5$) and the probability value for each is greater than 0.05.

Table 6.13

Individual Item Fit Statistics for Items 24 to 30

Seq	Location	SE	Residual	DF	ChiSq	DF	Prob
24	-2.64	0.24	2.97	89.54	2.98	2	0.23
25	-2.79	0.24	1.44	89.54	6.94	2	0.03
26	0.01	0.19	-1.65	88.71	5.06	2	0.08
27	0.36	0.20	-2.18	88.71	3.50	2	0.17
28	0.85	0.18	-1.14	87.89	1.20	2	0.55
29	2.37	0.19	0.75	88.71	0.54	2	0.76
30	1.83	0.17	-0.53	87.89	1.10	2	0.58

Summary of test-of-fit statistics

The summary of test-of-fit statistics for the facet of role value is displayed in Table 6.14. The item-person interaction statistics show that the mean of the item fit residual is -0.05 and the mean of the person fit residual is -0.32, which are close to the ideal mean of zero. The standard deviation of the item fit residual is a little high at 1.85, whereas the standard deviation of the person fit residual is close to ideal at 0.97. The item-trait interaction Chi Square probability value of 0.09 indicates good overall data-to-model fit for the facet of role clarity. The separation index, which indicates the distribution of middle leader's scores along the scale, is 0.84, which is close to the ideal value of one.

Table 6.14

Summary of Test-of-Fit Statistics for Role Value

	ITEM-PERSON INTERACTION			
	ITEMS		PERSONS	
	Location	Fit Residual	Location	Fit Residual
Mean	0	-0.05	2.85	-0.32
SD	2.02	1.85	2.41	0.97

Correlation	0	-0.01
Complete Data DF =	0.83	
ITEM-TRAIT INTERACTION		RELIABILITY INDICES
Total Chi Squ	21.31	Separation Index 0.84
Total Deg of Freedom	14	Cronbach Alpha N/A
Total Chi Squ Prob	0.09	
LIKELIHOOD-RATIO TEST		POWER OF TEST-OF-FIT
Chi Squ		Power is GOOD
Degrees of Freedom		[Based on SepIndex of 0.84]
Probability		

Person-item threshold distribution

The person-item threshold distribution graph is displayed in Figure 6.18 below. The graph plots the range of item threshold locations on the same scale as the middle leaders' scores. The distribution graph shows that the items are generally well targeted at the lower end of the scale below the zero score. However, two item threshold locations are placed below -6.0 logits, whereas all of the respondents' person location scores are above -2.0 logits on the scale. These bottom two item threshold locations are for the unordered 1:2 threshold for Items 24 and 25. This once again indicates that these two items did not function as intended and weren't useful measures of the middle leaders' role perceptions.

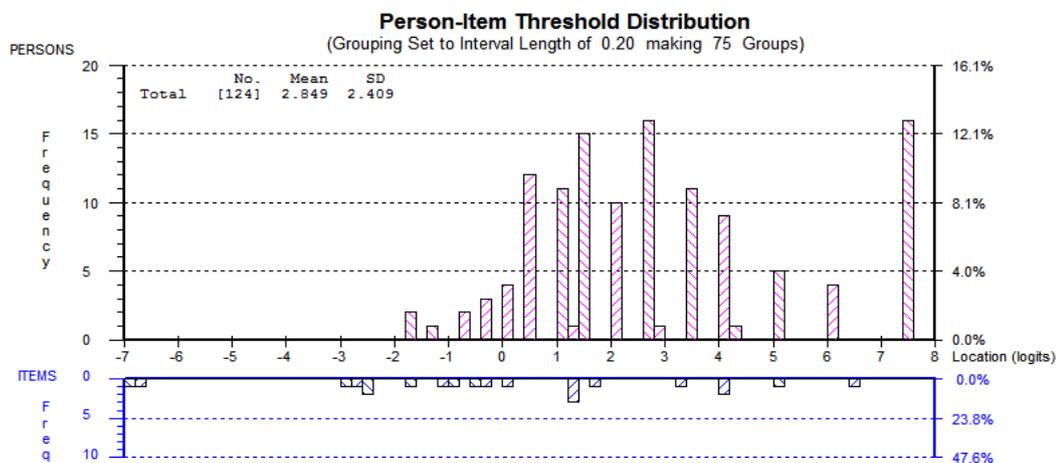


Figure 6.18 *Person-Item Threshold Distribution for Role Value*

At the other end, a high frequency of scores at the top of the scale can be noticed. Sixteen middle leaders are situated more than 7 logits above the zero score on the person location scale. These sixteen middle leaders, when we examine the individual person fit statistics, are shown to have extreme scores, in that they had a total 21 out of a possible 21 for the facet of role value. That is, these respondents selected the highest category (strongly agree) for all seven items. The highest item threshold location on the scale is below 7 logits, indicating the need for more difficult items at the top end of the scale. Likewise, there are a number of gaps on the continuum at the higher end of the item threshold scale, which indicate that the perceptions of middle leaders were not being measured as precisely as possible. This suggests that additional items measuring role value and targeting middle leaders with higher location scores would have strengthened the survey instrument.

Differential item functioning

No differential item functioning was present for Items 24 to 30, due to the respondents' type of position, years of experience or gender.

Factor analysis of residuals

The Principal Components Factor Analysis for Items 24 to 30 is presented in Table 6.15 below. The strong loadings (>0.3) have been highlighted and multiple loadings on the first and third factors can be seen. The presence of some structure in the factors suggests that the construct being measured by these items (role value) is not completely uni-dimensional.

Table 6.15

Principal Components Loadings for Role Value

Item	PC1	PC2	PC3	PC4	PC5	PC6	PC7
I0024	0.80	-0.13	-0.01	-0.06	0.21	0.53	0.08
I0025	0.85	0.05	-0.07	0.17	-0.02	-0.49	0.10
I0026	-0.27	-0.57	0.45	-0.59	0.15	-0.14	0.08
I0027	-0.33	0.02	0.70	0.62	0.02	0.08	0.08
I0028	-0.31	-0.60	-0.49	0.18	-0.51	0.09	0.09
I0029	-0.17	0.82	0.08	-0.34	-0.40	0.09	0.10
I0030	-0.57	0.24	-0.50	0.08	0.59	-0.03	0.09

Item affirmativeness

Table 6.16 displays the item location scores for the seven items measuring role value.

Table 6.16

Item Affirmativeness table for Role Support

Item Number	Item Statement	Location (Logits)	Rank from easiest to hardest
24	I believe that my role is worthwhile.	-2.64	2
25	I see my role is as being beneficial to the day-to-day functioning of my school.	-2.79	1
26	My work is valued by the members of the school community.	0.01	3
27	My work is recognised by the school members.	0.36	4
28	My colleagues view my work as being of high importance.	0.85	5
29	My work is regularly acknowledged by members of the school community.	2.37	7
30	My work is recognised by the school community as being vital to the school's operation and performance.	1.83	6

Items 24 and 25 have the lowest location scores of -2.64 logits and -2.79 logits respectively. These two items have significantly lower location scores than the other five items for the facet of role value. This indicates that the middle leaders found Items 24 and 25 much easier to affirm than the other items, as discussed earlier in the explanation of the person-item threshold distribution graph for this facet. Item 24 required middle leaders to respond to the statement, “I believe that my role is worthwhile”, and Item 25 asked middle leaders to consider the statement, “I see my role as being beneficial to the day-to-day functioning of my school”. These two items were comparatively very easy for middle leaders affirm, and even low-scoring respondents were able to agree with the statements for Items 24 and 25. Item 26, with the statement, “My work is valued by the members of the school community”, had the next lowest location score of 0.01 logits, markedly higher than Items 24 and 25. Items 27 and 28 were the next most difficult items for the facet of role support. Item 27 has a location score of 0.36 logits, with the statement, “My work is recognised by the school members”. Whereas Item 28 has a higher location score of 0.85 logits with the statement, “My colleagues view my work as being of high importance”. Item 30 was the second most difficult item for middle leaders to affirm,

with a comparatively high location score of 1.83 logits. Item 30 posed the statement “My work is recognised by the school community as being vital to the school’s operation and performance”. Item 29 had the highest location score (2.37 logits) out of all of the seven items for role values. Item 29 asked middle leaders to respond to the statement, “My work is regularly acknowledged by members of the school community”. Middle leaders found this statement the most difficult to affirm of all seven items measuring role value.

Facet five: Role fulfilment

Role fulfilment was the final construct measured by the instrument. The last six items on the survey from Item 31 to 36 were designed to measure the level of professional satisfaction middle leaders found in their work. The items asked middle leaders to respond to statements about the level of enjoyment, stimulation and fulfilment they find in their work as middle leaders.

Fit of data to the Rasch model

Category probability curve

The category probability curve for Item 31 is displayed below in Figure 6.19. Item 31 was the first item on the survey targeting the construct of role fulfilment. Middle leaders were asked to respond to the statement, “I find satisfaction in my work”. The category probability curve shows that the three threshold locations are ordered correctly, however, the strongly disagree/disagree (0:1) threshold location is very close to the disagree/agree (1:2) threshold location. Both of these thresholds fall within 1 logit on the scale, with the 0:1 threshold placed at just above -2.0 logits and the 1:2 threshold location at just above -1.0 logits. This indicates that at this point on the scale a small difference in the person location scores (indicating level of affirmativeness) could make a large difference in the probability of a respondent selecting a particular response category. For example, a middle leader with a location score of -2.0 logits has a higher probability (0.5) of selecting the strongly disagree response category, and a lower probability (0.1) of selecting the agree category.

However, for a middle leader with a location score of -1.0 logit, just one logit higher on the scale, the probabilities have reversed. There is a lower probability (0.2) that they will select the strongly disagree category and higher probability that they will select the agree category. There is evidence to suggest that the two lower response categories (strongly disagree and disagree) could be collapsed for this item.

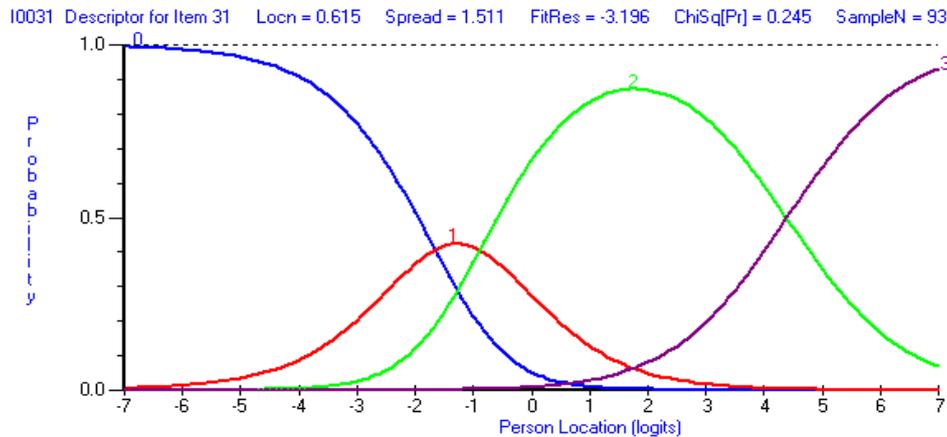


Figure 6.19 Category Probability Curve for Item 31

Threshold map

The graph below in Figure 6.20 displays the threshold map for Items 31 to 36. The threshold map shows that the response categories for all of the items measuring role fulfilment are ordered and, as such, are working as intended. The respondents had a consistent understanding of the difficulty of these six items and used the response categories in a logical way.

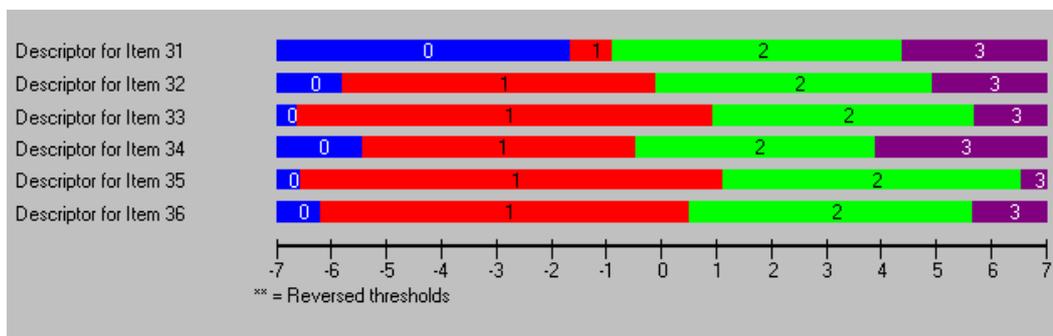


Figure 6.20 Threshold Map for Items 31 to 36

Item characteristic curve

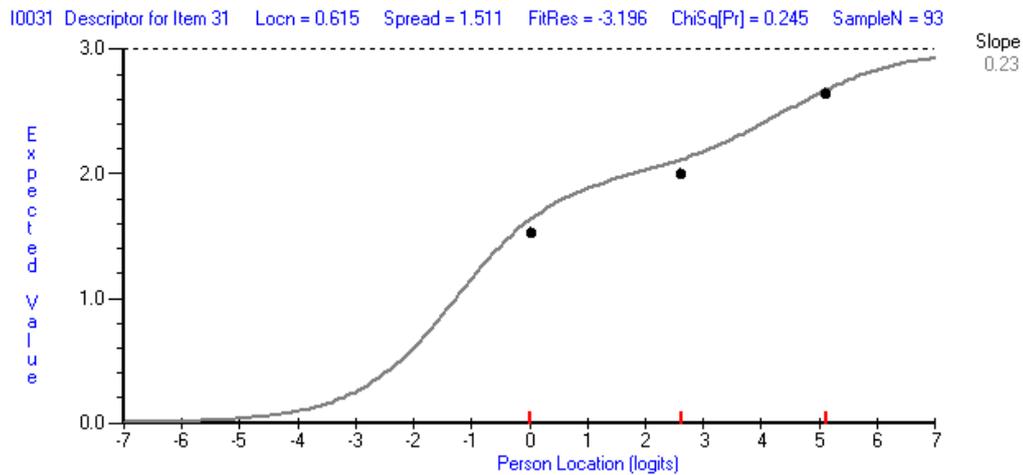


Figure 6.21 *Item Characteristic Curve for Item 31*

The Item Characteristic Curve for Item 31, shown above in Figure 6.21, indicates how well the observed scores for this item matched the expected values. The observed scores which have been plotted against the predicted value curve fall slightly below the expected values. The high residual of -3.19 also suggests that the data for this item does not closely fit the model.

Individual item fit statistics

The item fit statistics for Items 31 to 36 are displayed in Table 6.17. The fit statistics for Items 31 and 33 show that the residuals for these two items are too high, with a residual of -3.20 for Item 31 and -3.40 for Item 33. Item 35 has a probability of less than 0.05 which also indicates a poor fit to the model. The high residuals of Items 31 and 33, as well as the low probability of Item 35, indicate that the data for these three items do not fit the measurement model well and this needs to be taken into consideration when analysing and interpreting the data. The fit statistics for the other three items (residuals $< \pm 2.5$ and probability > 0.05) suggest that these items fit the model well.

Table 6.17

Individual Item Fit Statistics for Items 31-36

Seq	Location	SE	Residual	DF	ChiSq	DF	Prob
31	0.62	0.24	-3.20	74.53	2.81	2	0.25
32	-0.32	0.25	-1.75	73.73	1.05	2	0.59
33	0.00	0.24	-3.40	73.73	4.96	2	0.08
34	-0.67	0.24	1.08	73.73	3.26	2	0.20
35	0.37	0.25	-0.17	73.73	7.20	2	0.03
36	-0.01	0.25	-1.74	74.53	1.05	2	0.59

Summary of test-of-fit statistics

The overall test-of-fit statistics for Items 31-36 are shown below in Table 6.18. The item-person interaction figures show that the mean of the item fit residual is quite high at -1.53, as the residual should be close to zero for a good fit to the model. Similarly, the standard deviation of the item fit residual is high at 1.73, with an ideal standard deviation being 1. These statistics indicate that items measuring role fulfilment do not closely fit the measurement model. The person fit residual of -0.80 and standard deviation of 1.18 more closely match the test-of-fit requirements. The item-trait interaction Chi Square probability of 0.06 is just greater than 0.05, and ideally this would have been higher. The separation index of 0.82 indicates a good overall reliability for the facet of role fulfilment.

Table 6.18

Summary of Test-of-Fit Statistics for Role Fulfilment

	ITEM-PERSON INTERACTION		PERSONS	
	ITEMS Location	Fit Residual	Location	Fit Residual
Mean	0	-1.53	4.43	-0.80
SD	0.46	1.73	2.70	1.18
Correlation		0		0.25
Complete Data DF =		0.80		

ITEM-TRAIT INTERACTION		RELIABILITY INDICES	
Total Item Chi Squ	20.34	Separation Index	0.82
Total Deg of Freedom	12.00	Cronbach Alpha	N/A
Total Chi Squ Prob	0.06		

LIKELIHOOD-RATIO TEST	POWER OF TEST-OF-FIT
Chi Squ	Power is GOOD
Degrees of Freedom	[Based on SepIndex of 0.82]
Probability	

Person-item threshold distribution

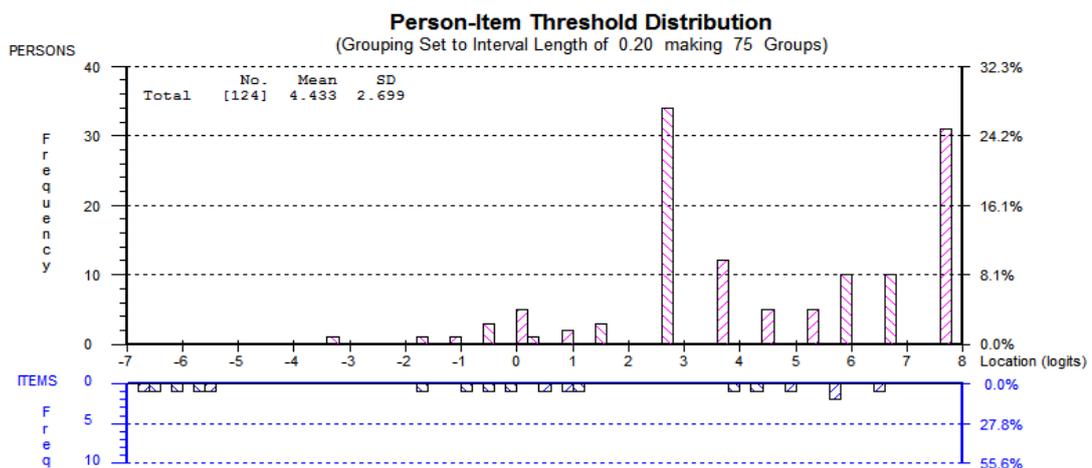


Figure 6.22 Person-Item Threshold Distribution for Role Fulfilment

The person-item threshold distribution graph, shown in Figure 6.22, indicates that there were a high number of middle leaders who had high person location scores for the facet of role fulfilment. As with the previous facet of role value, there were a number of extreme scores for role fulfilment, with 31 middle leaders achieving the highest possible total of 18 for the last six items of the survey relating to role fulfilment. These middle leaders had a person location score of more than 7.0 logits, whereas the highest item threshold location was less than 7.0 logits, indicating that the range of items was not difficult enough for the most affirmative middle leaders. At the lower end of the scale, several items had a location score of less than -5.0 logits, whereas the lowest person location score was well above this on the scale. This suggests that items at both the high and low end of the range were too easy for the respondents. It is also noticeable that there are two gaps on the continuum, where

a range of person locations were not matched by the item thresholds. Middle leaders with a person score of between -2.0 and -5.0 logits were not targeted by the items; nor were middle leaders with scores between 4.0 and 1.0 logits. This suggests that additional items were needed to target the full range of middle leaders' scores, and items which were harder to affirm were needed at the higher end of the scale.

Differential Item Functioning

No differential item functioning was presented for any of the six items measuring role fulfilment.

Factor analysis of residuals

The Principal Components Factor Analysis displayed in Table 6.19 shows that some structure is present in the first factor. Two items (Items 34 and 35) are strongly loaded on the first factor, yet the other high loadings are distributed across the six factors. This indicates that the construct of role fulfilment is not completely uni-dimensional.

Table 6.19

Principal Components Loadings for Role Fulfilment

Item	PC1	PC2	PC3	PC4	PC5	PC6
I0031	-0.38	-0.49	-0.04	0.68	0.40	0.05
I0032	-0.52	0.41	-0.54	0.19	-0.48	0.07
I0033	-0.57	0.15	-0.15	-0.60	0.52	0.05
I0034	0.55	0.70	0.33	0.21	0.22	0.09
I0035	0.67	-0.58	-0.36	-0.25	-0.11	0.10
I0036	-0.42	-0.28	0.77	-0.16	-0.36	0.07

Item affirmativeness

The location scores of the six items measuring role fulfilment are outlined in Table 6.20. Of the 6 items making up the scale for role fulfilment, Item 34 had the lowest location score of -0.67 logits, indicating that this item was the easiest for middle leaders to affirm. Item 34 presented the statement, "I enjoy the professional

interactions required by the position”. Item 32 had the next highest location score of -0.32 logits. The statement for Item 32, “I find my work stimulating”, was more difficult for middle leaders to affirm than Item 34, but overall it was still a relatively easy item for middle leaders to affirm. Item 36, “I experience a strong sense of professional satisfaction”, also had a negative location score of -0.01 logits and was the third easiest item on the role fulfilment scale.

At the higher end of the continuum Item 33, “I find my work fulfilling and rewarding”, was considered an easier item to affirm (location 0.00 logits) than Item 35, “My day-to-day experience is enjoyable and positive” (location 0.37 logits). Item 31, “I find satisfaction in my work” had the highest location score for the facet of role fulfilment (location 0.62 logits) and was therefore the most difficult of the six items for middle leaders to affirm.

Table 6.20

Item Affirmativeness table for Role Fulfilment

Item Number	Item Statement	Location (Logits)	Rank from easiest to hardest
31	I find satisfaction in my work.	0.62	6
32	I find my work stimulating.	-0.32	2
33	I find my work fulfilling and rewarding.	0.00	4
34	I enjoy the professional interactions required by the position.	-0.67	1
35	My day-to-day experience is enjoyable and positive.	0.37	5
36	I experience a strong sense of professional satisfaction.	-0.01	3

Overview of separate analysis of facets

Using a separate analysis of the five facets of role clarity, role authority, role support, role value and role fulfilment, apart from the item trait interaction the data fit the Rasch measurement model well. With a few exceptions, most of the items in the survey functioned as expected and fit the model. However, Items 24, 31 and 33 had a fit residual greater than ± 2.5 , while Items 11, 25 and 35 had a probability < 0.05 , which suggests that these item did not perform as expected and do not closely

fit the measurement model. Consideration should be given to these items when interpreting the data and forming conclusions. As mentioned, Items 24 and 25 had reversed thresholds, as none of the respondents selected the ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ categories for these items. Therefore, the survey could be refined by collapsing the four response categories for these two items, providing only two response options. Overall, the level of item difficulty was quite easy for respondents to affirm, especially for middle leaders with a high person location score. The instrument could be strengthened by developing more difficult items for each of the facets, which aim to target more affirmative middle leaders.

Overall Item Difficulty

The analysis of the instrument thus far has examined the 36 survey items separately, using five separate sub-scales and focusing on six to nine items at a time. Having considered the five facets of the instrument, it is useful to consider how the 36 items measuring middle leaders’ role perceptions function relative to each other when combined on a single scale. By analysing all of the items on a common scale, it is possible to determine the overall range of item difficulty, and also which items overall were the easiest or most difficult for middle leaders to affirm.

Summary of test-of-fit statistics for the combined analysis

The summary of the test-of-fit statistics for the combined analysis of all items on a single scale is shown in Table 6.21. The mean of the items fit residual was 0.06 and the mean of the fit residual for the persons was 0.21, both of which are close to the ideal score of zero. The standard deviation of the item fit residual was 1.14 and the standard deviation of the person fit residual was 1.58, which likewise are close to the ideal standard deviation of 1. The separation index, a test of reliability, is high at 0.94 and is close to the ideal score of 1.0. However, the total Chi Square probability of zero is too low, with a probability greater than 0.05 required for a good data-to-model fit. The low probability suggests that the measure is multi-dimensional, and thus caution is advised when interpreting the results from this data.

Table 6.21

Summary of test-of-fit statistics for all items

	ITEM-PERSON INTERACTION			
	ITEMS		PERSONS	
	Location	Fit Residual	Location	Fit Residual
Mean	0.00	0.06	1.70	0.21
SD	1.24	1.14	1.27	1.58
Skewness	-0.76	0.45	0.58	0.27
			N= 124	
Correlation [locn/stdResid]		0.38		0.03

ITEM-TRAIT INTERACTION		RELIABILITY INDICES	
Total Item Chi Squ	143.41	Separation Index	0.94
Total Deg of Freedom	72	Cronbach Alpha	N/A
Total Chi Squ Prob	0.00001		

Average location scores

Table 6.22 displays the location score for each of the 36 survey items combined on a single scale. By combining the items, it is possible to see which of the five facets were the easiest or most difficult for middle leaders to affirm, based on the mean location score for the respective items.

Table 6.22

Mean location scores for five facets

Facet	Seq	Location
Role Clarity	1	0.28
	2	0.96
	3	0.91
	4	0.28
	5	0.76
	6	0.28
	7	1.87
Mean Location:		0.76
Role Authority	8	-1.69
	9	-1.92
	10	-0.04
	11	-0.14
	12	1.06
	13	-0.05
	14	0.82
Mean Location:		-0.28

Facet	Seq	Location
Role Support	15	0.36
	16	0.71
	17	1.35
	18	0.39
	19	1.06
	20	0.45
	21	1.47
	22	1.38
	23	1.36
Mean Location:		0.95
Role Value	24	-2.78
	25	-2.77
	26	-0.38
	27	-0.17
	28	0.27
	29	1.05
	30	0.94
Mean Location:		-0.55
Role Fulfilment	31	-0.31
	32	-1.67
	33	-1.50
	34	-1.74
	35	-1.39
	36	-1.46
Mean Location		-1.34

The facet of role fulfilment was the easiest of the five facets for middle leaders to affirm, with a mean location score of -1.34 logits for the corresponding six items. Overall, middle leaders found each of the items measuring role fulfilment comparatively easy to agree with. The item location scores for this facet range from -1.74 logits for Item 34 (“I enjoy the professional interactions required by the position”) to -0.31 logits for Item 31 (“I find satisfaction in my work”). Thus middle leaders found it easy to affirm even the hardest item for the facet of role fulfilment. Role value was the next easiest construct for middle leaders to affirm, with mean location scores of -0.55 logits for the seven related items. Within this facet, the range of individual item location scores was noticeably broader than for role fulfilment, indicating that some of the items were more difficult for middle leaders to affirm. Items 24 and 25 (“I believe that my role is worthwhile” and “I see my role as being beneficial to the day-to-day functioning of my school”), for example, had a

similarly low location score of -2.78 and -2.77 logits respectively. In fact, Items 24 and 25 were the easiest of the 36 survey items for middle leaders to affirm when the facets were collectively analysed. In comparison, Item 29 (“My work is regularly acknowledged by members of the school community”), also an item measuring role value, had a location score of 1.05 logits, which is a lot higher than the mean location score for the facet. This indicates that the statement was, comparatively, much harder for middle leaders to affirm than other the items in within this facet.

The seven items comprising the facet of role authority were also relatively easy for middle leaders to affirm, with a mean location score of -0.28 logits. The items within this facet had location scores ranging from -1.92 logits for Item 9 (“There are opportunities for me to voice concerns about school issues”) to a higher location score of 1.06 logits for Item 12 (“I am consulted by the schools’ senior leaders about all important, whole-school decisions or plans”); these scores indicate that middle leaders found this statement more difficult to affirm than the other items in the facet. The items relating to the constructs of role clarity and role support were the most difficult for middle leaders to affirm. The facet of role clarity had a comparatively high mean location score of 0.76 logits. In this facet, Item 7 (“There is a deep and detailed understanding of the role throughout the school community”) was the item middle leaders found the most difficult of all 36 items on the survey instrument to agree with. The facet of role support had the highest mean location score (0.95 logits) of all of the facets in the combined analysis, indicating that middle leaders found these items the most difficult to affirm. Within this facet even Item 15, the easiest item to affirm with a location score of 0.36 logits, had a higher score than the mean location scores of the items measuring role fulfilment, role value and role authority. This indicates that middle leaders were less affirmative of the level of support afforded to them in their role. Overall, middle leaders found the items relating to their sense of fulfilment, the value of their role and their degree of role authority to be the easiest to agree with, whereas items relating to the level of role clarity and the support provided to them as leaders were comparatively more difficult for middle leaders to affirm.

Item map

Table 6.23 shows the person scores for each of the respondents presented against the item difficulties on the logit scale. On the left-hand side of the scale, the table indicates the range of person scores for each of the respondents; that is, the middle leaders with the lowest role perceptions through to the respondents with the highest role perceptions. The person scores range from the lowest role perceptions at -1.6 logits on the scale to the highest role perceptions at +5.6 logits. The wide range from the highest to the lowest person score suggests that middle leaders can hold very different perceptions of their role. In the right-hand column of the table, the item difficulty scores are plotted on the same scale to indicate how well targeted the items were to the middle leaders' level of affirmativeness. The three thresholds for each item have been plotted to indicate the full range of item difficulty. The table shows that, on the whole, middle leaders were quite affirmative of their roles, with most respondents attaining a person score greater than zero. Items 24, 25 and 34, for instance, were very easy for middle leaders to affirm, with even the highest response threshold being affirmed by the majority of middle leaders. At the other end of the scale, the higher response thresholds for Items 7, 29, 6, 23, 21, 17 and 14, were the most difficult for middle leaders to affirm. Item 7 ("There is a deep and detailed understanding of the role throughout the school community"), with a total location score of 1.87 and the highest threshold for the item, scoring 4.8 logits, was the hardest of the 36 items for middle leaders to affirm. Overall many of the items were very easy for the middle leaders to affirm and the survey could be refined by including more difficult items at the higher end of the scale, in order to better target the middle leaders' higher levels of affirmativeness.

Table 6.23

Item Map

Location	Persons	Items	[uncentralised thresholds]			
	High role perceptions	Difficult to affirm items				
6.0	×					
5.0	xx x x	I0007.3				
4.0	xxxx xxxxx xxx	I0029.3 I0018.3 I0019.3	I0006.3 I0016.3	I0023.3	I0021.3 I0017.3 I0014.3	
3.0	xx xx xxx xxx	I0012.3 I0005.3 I0028.3 I0010.3	I0003.3 I0002.3 I0035.3	I0013.3 I0027.3	I0020.3 I0030.3 I0022.3 I0004.3	
2.0	xxxxxxx xxxxxxx xxxxxxxxxxx xxxxxxx xxxxxxx	I0015.3 I0036.3 I0032.3 I0031.3 I0007.2	I0011.3 I0033.3 I0008.3	I0001.3 I0026.3 I0009.3		
1.0	xxxxxxxxxxx xxxxx xxx xxxxxxx xxxxxxx	I0017.2 I0014.2 I0024.3 I0018.2 I0022.1	I0034.3 I0029.2 I0003.2 I0002.2	I0023.2 I0019.2 I0025.3	I0012.2 I0016.2 I0006.2 I0021.2 I0030.2	
0	xxxxxxx xxx	I0013.2 I0011.2 I0001.2 I0015.1	I0021.1 I0010.2 I0002.1	I0020.2 I0005.1	I0004.2 I0028.2 I0005.2	
-1.0	×	I0031.1 I0023.1 I0030.1 I0032.2 I0028.1	I0036.2 I0003.1 I0001.1 I0012.1 I0034.2	I0035.2 I0026.2 I0029.1	I0017.1 I0007.1 I0027.2 I0019.1 I0015.2 I0033.2	
-2.0	×	I0008.2 I0004.1 I0024.1 I0010.1 I0011.1 I0018.1	I0020.1 I0025.1 I0014.1 I0026.1	I0016.1 I0027.1	I0031.2	
-3.0		I0009.2 I0013.1 I0006.1				
-4.0						
-5.0		I0009.1 I0008.1	I0034.1			
-6.0		I0032.1 I0036.1 I0033.1 I0035.1				
-7.0		I0024.2	I0025.2			
	Low role perceptions	Easy to affirm items				

× = 1 Person

Summary

This chapter has presented the results from a quantitative survey measuring middle leaders' role perceptions. The results were analysed using five separate sub-scales, each measuring one facet of middle leaders' role perceptions. The five aspects or facets of the survey instrument were role clarity, role authority, role support, role value and role fulfilment. The separate analyses were conducted in order to check the Rasch measurement model's requirement of uni-dimensionality; in other words, to ensure that the instrument was not measuring multiple construct on the same scale. Using the five separate analyses, the data were seen to fit the model well, and evidence suggests that a measure of middle leaders' role perceptions was constructed. Some individual items (Items 11, 24, 25, 31, 33 and 35) did not closely fit the model or did not perform as expected. Therefore, consideration should be taken when analysing and drawing inferences based on these misfitting survey items. The results suggest that, on the whole, middle leaders were quite affirmative across each of the five facets and more difficult items could be included on the survey, in order to better target the most affirmative respondents.

The survey data were also examined using a combined analysis of each of the five facets, in order to allow for comparison of item difficulty across the whole survey instrument. The combined analysis of the five facets is meant to be interpreted in conjunction with the separate analyses of the individual facets. The presence of multi-dimensionality when the data are analysed on a single scale means that there is a weaker data-to-model fit, and caution should be taken when interpreting the results of the combined analysis in isolation. The results of the combined analysis of facets suggests that middle leaders found the items relating to role fulfilment, role value and role authority quite easy to affirm. However, the items addressing issues of role clarity and role support were comparatively harder for middle leaders to affirm. The following chapter presents a discussion of the results of both the qualitative and quantitative results, as well as an explanation of the implications of the study for schools and future research.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Overview

This chapter is a discussion of the findings from both the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study. The chapter is structured around the five research questions, which form the focus of the research project. Each of the research questions are discussed individually, incorporating and synthesising relevant results from the qualitative phase, including the document analysis of position descriptions, the semi-structured interviews of school leaders, the quantitative findings, as well as material from the review of literature.

1. How is the middle leadership role explained in school documents?

The literature indicates that middle leaders take on many different roles within the school organisation. Busher (2005, p. 142), for example, outlines six *key functional aspects of middle leaders' work* as follows:

1. *Having a vision for their department;*
2. *Having the will to use power: Managership;*
3. *Working with staff to implement action;*
4. *Coordinating and implementing action effectively;*
5. *Mediating contexts; engaging in arenas;*
6. *Being a teacher - a successful model for colleagues.*

Dinham (2007, p. 67) explains the key ways in which middle leaders contribute to successful school outcomes and identifies the core strategy as “focus on students and their learning”. Dinham (2007) additionally outlines contributing roles as:

Personal qualities, relationships; professional capacity, strategy; promotion and advocacy, external relationships; department planning and organisation;

common purpose, collaboration, team building; teaching learning, responsibility, trust; visions, expectation and culture of success (p. 67).

Gunter and Fitzgerald (2007) likewise outline key roles performed by middle leaders (see Chapter 2), specifying the functions and capabilities of middle leaders across teaching, management and leadership.

Following a preliminary examination of existing frameworks relating to leadership functions, such as the above, a content analysis of middle leadership position descriptions was undertaken. The position descriptions covered a range of middle leadership positions, including those for subject, pastoral and specialist program leaders. From these documents the specific duties of middle leaders were identified. The data were coded and categorised, with the aim of developing a framework which would overview the key organisational functions of middle leaders in secondary schools. Through the process of content analysis, nine core functions of middle leaders emerged from the data. Middle leaders are typically expected to:

1. Coordinate the educational program
2. Manage the operations of the area
3. Comply with accountability requirements
4. Support student learning
5. Promote effective communication and collaboration
6. Build school community and culture
7. Contribute to whole-school planning and change management
8. Promote and model professional excellence
9. Support and encourage staff.

This framework was designed to capture the range of functions middle leaders are expected to perform within the school organisation. These functions reflect and support the findings of previous studies outlining the work of middle leaders, including Busher (2005), Dinham (2007) and Gunter and Fitzgerald (2007). Each of the nine functions are explained more specifically in this chapter, in the section discussing the expected duties of middle leaders. This process and resultant framework was useful in developing a detailed understanding of the work of middle leaders. These understandings were then used to inform the subsequent phase of the

research, which involved the development of interview schedules and the interviewing of middle and senior leaders in three secondary schools.

2. How do senior leaders and middle leaders explain the middle leadership role?

The second phase of the study focused on determining the perceptions school leaders have about middle leadership. This was achieved by undertaking a series of semi-structured interviews with middle leaders, across a range of middle leadership positions and schools. Twelve school leaders from across three schools were interviewed. These included a senior leader (Deputy Principals), as well as three middle leaders from each school. In order to include the views of middle leaders across varied positions, the sample of middle leaders within the schools was purposive. In order to promote a range of experiences and viewpoints, where possible, a subject leader, pastoral leader and a specialist program leader were interviewed. As previously mentioned, the interview schedule was developed following a review of literature about educational middle leadership and the document analysis.

Following the interviews, the data were transcribed, coded and categorised. Themes derived from the review of literature provided an initial analytical framework for the interview data. Emergent themes were also recorded and built upon the framework. These emergent themes included: the affective response of middle leaders to their work; the professional support of middle leaders; and the strategies middle leaders use to manage their work. Ultimately, the following issues and themes emerged from the interviews with senior and middle leaders:

1. The nature of the middle leadership role
 - a. The dual nature of middle leadership
 - b. The dynamic nature of middle leadership
2. Problems and limitations of the middle leadership role
 - a. Lack of role clarity
 - b. Role scope
 - c. Limited role authority and recognition
 - d. Role tensions and conflict

3. The organisational function of middle leaders
 - a. Coordination
 - b. Communication
 - c. Decision-making and planning
 - d. Support
4. The qualities of effective middle leaders
 - a. Characteristics of effective middle leaders
 - b. Strategies and advice for middle leaders
5. Job preparation and professional development needs
 - a. The transition to middle leadership
 - b. Professional development
 - c. Restrictions on professional development
6. The support and review of middle leaders
7. The aspirations and satisfaction of middle leaders.
 - a. Motivation for being a middle leader
 - b. Position-related goals
 - c. Career expectations and aspirations
 - d. Role fulfilment

This framework provided a structure for presenting the interview results. Middle leadership is widely seen by both middle and senior leaders as vital to the effective daily operation of secondary schools. Educational middle leaders, whether subject-based, pastoral-based or program-based, play a unique leadership role. One of the functions of middle leadership is the bridging role that middle leaders play in linking a school's senior leadership with other members of the school community, particularly the teachers and students (Weller, 2001; White, 2000). The unique functions of middle leaders can also lead to unique challenges, such as the need to manage and balance their dual teaching and administrative roles. Their work requires middle leaders to function within "...the multiple communities that make up a school" (Busher et al., 2007, p. 407), causing some middle leaders to experience conflict and tensions, including a sense of divided loyalty where the ideas and opinions of senior leaders to whom they are responsible do not match those of the teaching and ancillary staff, *for* whom they are responsible.

Middle leadership is a dynamic position that has faced constant and considerable changes in recent years (Fitzgerald, 2009). As a part of these changes, some middle leaders have experienced a significant redefinition of their position as the needs and structures of schools shift and roles blur. Factors such as teaching shortages and broad curriculum changes were seen as key factors impacting the work of middle leaders. The interview data suggest that the position has become increasingly complex, with higher expectations, demands and accountability. In particular, some middle leaders have experienced a 'sandwiching' of the role, where the increased workloads of senior leaders and teaching staff have placed pressure on middle leaders from both sides of the school organisational structure. Increases in the workload and responsibilities of middle leaders have not necessarily translated to increased authority or influence in whole-school planning or decision-making. Middle leaders commonly felt frustrated at the lack of opportunities to be involved in whole-school development processes and some believed their role was undervalued or not fully recognised within the school or wider educational community.

Certain pressures and difficulties are limiting the extent to which middle leaders are able to successfully and effectively fulfil their position requirements. Middle leaders need a balance of individual qualities and skills, as well external support structures and strategies, to most effectively meet the demands of their position. Most notably, the allocation of adequate additional time outside of their classroom commitments is needed to facilitate middle leaders in their role. Clearly defined and delineated position descriptions, effective operational systems and policies, and adequate staffing, resources and opportunities to access position-specific professional learning programs are also required to support middle leaders in their role. More formalised, ongoing review processes for middle leaders may also be required, to allow for the provision of regular feedback and targeted instruction and support.

Whether or not middle leaders seek further promotion, they frequently expressed satisfaction or enjoyment of their role. Some of the reasons cited for educators' enjoyment of middle leadership were the opportunity to build relationships with staff and students, and the opportunity to face positive challenges. Middle leaders also take on the position because they feel it will give them the opportunity to make changes and implement new initiatives. Middle leaders are in a position to strongly influence the attitudes of staff within their specific area of responsibility, and also

have the responsibility of implementing school policies and systems on a daily basis at the classroom level. As such, there is a need for schools to further recognise the potential that middle leaders have to profoundly and positively influence a school's culture and direction.

3. What does a middle leader self-report measure reveal about middle leaders' perception of their role?

Constructing a measure of middle leaders' perceptions

In order for a measurement of middle leaders' perceptions to be developed, the construct needed first to be qualified through the review of relevant literature, documents relating to the middle leadership role, and interviews with school leaders about the position. In other words, a measurement could not be developed without first developing a clear and comprehensive understanding of the construct to be measured. Wright and Masters (1982) identify qualification as one of the four criteria of measurement, along with uni-dimensionality, quantification and linearity. In the case of this study, a measure of middle leaders' role perceptions was developed, following a review of the literature and a two-part qualitative phase. This process was designed to provide the researcher with a detailed and thorough understanding of the topics and issues surrounding middle leadership. The mixed-methods research design allowed for the earlier qualitative phase to inform the subsequent quantitative phase, which involved the development and administration of a rating scale instrument designed to measure middle leaders' role perceptions. The following provides an overview of the processes and frameworks which were developed during the qualitative phase of the study.

Defining the construct

From the literature review and the qualitative phase of the study, five central features of the middle leadership role were identified. These five features include role clarity, role authority, role support, role value and role fulfilment. They capture the core elements influencing or impacting on the work of middle leaders and became the sub-constructs or facets around which the survey instrument was developed. Role

clarity refers to the degree to which middle leaders and other members of the school community understand the scope and expectations of the middle leadership position, as well as the degree to which the duties of middle leaders are clearly defined and delineated within the school organisational structure. Role authority refers to the degree of influence middle leaders hold within the school organisation, allowing them to make important decisions and meaningfully contribute to whole school development. Role support relates to the resources, practices and professional learning opportunities made available to middle leaders, in order to help them effectively meet their responsibilities. Role value is the degree to which middle leaders perceive that their work is seen to be important and is recognised within the school community. Finally, role fulfilment refers to how much professional satisfaction and enjoyment middle leaders derive from their work. Middle leaders' perceptions of these five features of middle leadership were measured using the survey instrument.

Quantifying the qualities of middle leadership

The results from the analysis of the survey data, as presented in the previous chapter, indicate that a measure of middle leaders' role perceptions was constructed. The 36-item survey instrument was structured into five facets, each designed to measure one aspect of middle leaders' role perceptions. These five facets then became the framework of the survey instrument, with a set of items developed for each of the facets. The item statements were designed to prompt middle leaders to reflect on and respond to the item, based on the degree to which they agreed with the statement. The items were written to cover a range of perceptions about middle leadership, reflecting both weak and strong opinions about each of the facets.

The survey data were analysed using RUMM 2030 (Rasch Uni-dimensional Measurement Models, RUMMLab, 2007), to determine whether the data fitted the Rasch measurement model. The Rasch model requires the data to have to properties of uni-dimensionality and invariance across different groups of people. As the survey instrument was multi-faceted, the data from the five facets were first analysed separately, in order to fulfil the measurement requirement of uni-dimensionality. A combined analysis of the data from the 36 survey items was subsequently undertaken to allow a comparison between the five facets and the full range of items.

In the separate analysis of the five facets, the survey data were shown to have a good fit to the Rasch measurement model. In the Rasch model good data fit is indicated where thresholds are ordered and the response categories are used in a logical and consistent way by respondents; this was the case with most of the items. Additionally, for items to fit the model the, fit residual needs to be below ± 2.5 and Chi Square probability should be >0.05 . Good data fit to the model is evidence that a measure of middle leaders' role perceptions was developed. There were some items that did not fully fit with the requirements of the Rasch model. For example, Items 24 and 25 did not discriminate as expected. None of the respondents opted for the Disagree or Strongly Disagree response categories and this resulted in disordered thresholds. Given this outcome, the instrument could be refined by removing two response categories, providing a two or three category response option for these items. The item fit statistics indicate that some of the survey items did not completely fit the model. Items 11, 25 and 35 were slightly misfitting, having lower than the required probability of $p > 0.05$ which shows fit to the model. Additionally, there was some misfit with Items 24, 31 and 33, with each having a residual $> \pm 2.5$, higher than required to show fit to the model. With the exception of these examples, most of the items fitted the Rasch model well, based on the test-of-fit statistics outlined in the previous chapter. Overall, there is evidence that the trait of middle-level leaders' perceptions of their role was measured.

The least affirmed features of the role and the most highly affirmed features of the role

When examining the results from the combined analysis of the five facets, which measures the difficulty of each of the survey items on a single scale, some of the constructs were clearly more difficult for middle leaders to affirm than others. Using the mean location scores for items from each of the five facets, the items measuring the constructs of role clarity and role support were the most difficult for middle leaders to affirm, with mean locations of 0.76 logits and 0.95 logits respectively. The facet of role authority was more highly affirmed by middle leaders, with a mean location of -0.28 logits, as was role value (mean location score -0.55 logits). The construct of role fulfilment and its related items were the easiest for middle leaders

to affirm, with a mean location score of -1.34 logits. In the following sections each of the facets is examined, using the combined analysis, from least affirmed to the most affirmed, examining how middle leaders responded to the survey items and explaining what the results indicate about middle leaders' perceptions of their role. Where relevant, connections to the qualitative interview data and literature about middle leadership are drawn.

Role support

Of the five facets measuring middle leaders' role perceptions, role support was the most difficult for middle leaders to affirm, with a mean location of 0.95 logits on the combined analysis of survey items. In this context, the concept of role support may include: formal professional development and training opportunities; mentoring; opportunities for appraisal and feedback; the provision of necessary resources; and appropriate time and budgetary allowances. Within the facet of role support, Items 15, 16, 18, and 20 were all comparatively easy for middle leaders to affirm, with middle leaders agreeing that they had been provided with additional non-teaching time, necessary resources, and opportunities for ongoing professional learning, and overall the respondents felt well-supported in their role. Middle leaders found Item 19, which asked middle leaders to affirm whether they felt that the professional learning they had received was specifically targeted to their work as middle leaders, slightly harder to affirm, and it showed a location score of 1.06 logits on the combined scale. The interview results also suggested that some middle leaders felt that the professional development they had received in the position did not specifically target the needs of their position. Relating to this, Senior Leader Three claimed that middle leaders needed a "staged, well documented leadership program". Items 17, 22 and 23 were also more difficult for middle leaders to affirm; these items relate to the adequacy of training opportunities for middle leaders, the appropriate allotment of non-teaching time to complete the responsibilities of their middle leadership role, and the quality of professional support received.

Ideas about the most effective forms of professional support for middle leaders are discussed in the literature. Turner (2000) explains that much of a middle leader's preparation for the role typically occurs informally before they take on the position,

as middle leaders rely on past experience and professional observation to inform their work. Turner (2006) suggests that schools focus on providing opportunities for mentoring, feedback and encouraging reflective practice for middle leaders. White (2000) warns that a lack of training and time can lead to issues of role ambiguity and conflict for middle leaders. Of the 9 items measuring role support, Item 21, which asked middle leaders to respond to the statement, “I receive an appropriate program budget”, was the most difficult for middle leaders to affirm, showing a location of 1.47 logits on the combined analysis. This result indicates that some middle leaders felt the need for more funding.

Role clarity

The facet of role clarity was also comparatively difficult for middle leaders to affirm, with a mean location score of 0.76 for the seven related items. Of these items, Items 1, 4 and 6 were the easiest for middle leaders to affirm; these items relate to the degree to which middle leaders perceived that there is a common and clear understanding of the main roles of their position. Each item had a location score of 0.28 logits on the combined analysis and some minor variation in the individual analysis of the facets. It was harder for middle leaders to agree with Item 5 (location 0.76 logits on the combined analysis), which asked about the scope of middle leaders’ role and the degree to which the associated responsibilities are manageable. Middle leaders were also less affirmative of Item 3 (0.91 logits) and Item 2 (0.96 logits) which related to the extent to which middle leaders perceived that the expectations of their role were clearly defined and documented in a written position description. Concerns with a lack of role clarity were evident in the literature on middle leadership positions and were also reflected in the interview results from the qualitative phase of this research project. Issues with the blurring of responsibilities amongst school leaders and a lack of clear role definition were seen by some middle leaders to be problematic when they were interviewed. These concerns are reflected in the survey results, in which the items measuring role clarity have comparatively higher location scores. Item 7, “there is a deep and detailed understanding of the role throughout the school community”, was ranked the most difficult of all the 36 survey items, with a location score of 1.87 logits on the combined analysis scale. Mayers

and Zepeda (2002) refer to the concept of role ambiguity, when there is uncertainty about the expectations of a role; Busher and Harris (1999) also state that leadership roles can lack a clear delineation between positions. The survey results suggest that role clarity is a concern for middle leaders, particularly the lack of a detailed, shared understanding of their role within a school community. However, whilst concerns are apparent it is important to note that even Item 7, the highest ranked item on the whole survey instrument, was affirmed by 40% of leaders with location scores above 1.6 logits.

Role authority

The items making up the construct of role authority were comparatively easy for middle leaders to affirm. As a whole the seven items within the facet had a mean location score of -0.28 logits in the combined analysis, with the items ranging in their level of difficulty from -1.92 logits at the easier end to 1.06 logits at the harder end of the continuum. Item 8 (“there are opportunities for me to contribute to whole-school planning and decision-making”) with a low location score of -1.69 logits, and Item 9 (“there are opportunities for me to voice concerns about school issues”) with a location score of -1.92 logits, were the easiest items in this facet for middle leaders to affirm. As these two items were highly affirmed by the majority of middle leaders who responded to the survey, it seems that middle leaders perceived that there are opportunities and avenues within their schools through which they can share their ideas and opinions. However, Items 12 and 14 were much harder for middle leaders to affirm, with location scores of 1.06 logits and 0.82 logits respectively, in the combined analysis of facets. Item 12 asked middle leaders to respond to the statement “I am consulted by the school’s senior leaders about all important whole-school decisions or plan”, and Item 14 asked for a response to “I play an influential role in whole-school development”. Thus, while many middle leaders agreed that there were opportunities for them to voice ideas and concerns about the operation of the school, the survey results indicate that middle leaders found it more difficult to agree that they had an influence on the broader whole-school decisions being made. Similarly, in the interview results, middle leaders expressed the opinion that they did not have a definite influence on whole-school development. For example, Middle

Leader Four stated that, “I know I’m a secondary level manager, so it’s never really my say as to whether things happen or not, but I’ve got a forum to express my views”. This reflects the survey data, which suggests middle leaders are more likely to agree they are involved in whole school decision-making and that their ideas are taken into account, but that ultimately they found it more difficult to affirm that their role in whole-school development is influential. The literature relating to middle leadership indicates that middle leaders have the potential to be influential both within their department and the wider school (Weller, 2001), but in many cases they have limited formal authority within the school (Bennett et al., 2007). Weller (2001) explains that subject-based middle leaders believe that they should have more influence in whole-school decision-making, with a lack of role authority potentially limiting the effectiveness of middle leadership positions. Weller (2001, p. 80) states: “The lack of line authority and an active voice in schoolwide decisions are two areas that conspire to thwart the effectiveness of the role of department head”. Overall, the survey data measuring the facet of role authority indicates that middle leaders do, on the whole, perceive that they have a voice within their schools, but that there are issues of limited influence and consultation during whole-school decision-making processes.

Role value

The facet of role value was also comparatively easy for middle leaders to affirm, with the seven items measuring this construct having a mean location score of -0.55 logits. Of the seven items in this construct, Item 24 (“I believe that my role is worthwhile”) and Item 25 (“I see my role as being beneficial to the day-to-day functioning of my school”), with locations of -2.78 logits and -2.77 logits respectively, were the easiest of all of the 36 items for respondents to affirm. As previously explained, these were the two items with reversed thresholds. Both items measured perceptions relating to role value, in particular the importance middle leaders attribute to their own role. Interestingly, middle leaders found it more difficult to affirm Item 29 (“my work is regularly acknowledged by members of the school community”) with a location of 1.05 logits on the combined analysis. Similarly, Item 30 “My work is recognised by the school community as being vital

to the school's operation and performance", was also more difficult for middle leaders to agree with (location 0.94 logits on the combined analysis). The locations for both of these items were a lot higher than the mean score for the facet, which indicates that middle leaders found these two items much harder to agree with than the other items relating to the construct of role value. What sets these questions apart from the easier statements relating to middle leaders' perceptions of the importance of their role, is that these items ask middle leaders about the degree to which they feel their role is acknowledged and recognised by other members of the school. Thus, whilst middle leaders could easily agree that they perceived their own role to be valuable, they found it more difficult to agree that the importance of their work is recognised by others in the school community.

The findings from the interviews with school leaders in the earlier qualitative phase of the study showed that middle leaders felt their role was important for a number of reasons. These reasons included the direct contact they have with staff and students on a daily basis, as well as their function as an intermediary between a school's senior leaders and teaching staff. These perceptions about the value of middle leadership are reflected in the results from the quantitative survey. Likewise, the findings from the interview phase of the study suggest that some middle leaders felt their role was under-valued within the school community. For example, Middle Leader Nine stated, "There is a need to definitely recognise the role of [middle leaders] more significantly". This perception of feeling under-acknowledged within the school was also reflected in the survey data, as mentioned above. While middle leaders perceive that their work is not widely recognised or acknowledged within the school, the interview findings show that senior leaders in schools do in fact consider the role to be vital within the school organisation. "Our school could not operate on the model that it does without [middle leaders], that's how significant they are", commented Senior Leader One. Thus, while school leaders may highly value the middle leaders' role, this perception is not necessarily being outwardly acknowledged or directly communicated to middle leaders, as the survey results suggest.

Role fulfilment

In the combined analysis of facets, Items 32, 33, 34, 35 and 36 were very easy for middle leaders to affirm. Each of these items relate to the notion of role fulfilment, that is, the professional satisfaction and enjoyment middle leaders derived from their work. Middle leaders on the whole were highly affirmative of the items measuring role fulfilment, with the mean location score for the facet being -1.34, the lowest of all of the five facets. Of the six survey items measuring role fulfilment, the easiest item for middle leaders to affirm was Item 34, with the statement, “I enjoy the professional interactions required by the position” (location -1.74 logits in the combined analysis), followed by Item 32 “I find my work stimulating” (location -1.67 logits in the combined analysis). For the facet of role fulfilment, the hardest item for middle leaders to affirm was Item 31, “I find satisfaction in my work”. However, when this item is looked at in terms of the difficulty of all 36 items, its location score of -0.31 logits suggests that middle leaders still found this item comparatively easy to answer. This high level of affirmativeness relating to job satisfaction was also reflected in the interview data; the middle leaders interviewed commented that they experienced a positive sense of professional satisfaction, and found their work as a middle leader to be enjoyable, stimulating and rewarding. In the interviews, middle leaders commented that they enjoyed several aspects of the position, including the diversity of the work, the professional relationships they were able to develop through the position, the greater sense of professional freedom or flexibility the position afforded them, and the balance of leadership and teaching responsibilities. Thus, despite tensions and issues relating to middle leadership roles such as role conflict and ambiguity, as reflected in the literature (Brown et al. 1999; White, 2000; Weller, 2001; Mayers & Zepeda, 2002; Fitzgerald, 2009), and the qualitative interview data, the survey instrument indicated high levels of role fulfilment among middle leaders.

Overall, middle leaders had greater difficulty affirming items relating to role authority, clarity and support, yet they were highly affirmative of items relating to role fulfilment and role value. The survey findings reflect the concerns and issues raised in the interview phase of the study, as well as the issues raised in the relevant literature about middle leadership, including: a perceived lack of recognition for the work of middle leaders within schools; limited influence on whole-school decisions;

the lack of a deep, detailed and shared understanding of the role of middle leaders in schools; limited training for the position; and the need for greater time and budgetary allowance. Despite these concerns, middle leaders perceived their work to be valuable, beneficial, stimulating and rewarding.

The impact of gender, type of position or years in the position on role perceptions

Of the three person factors, only the length of time in the position was associated with higher role perception scores. The perceptions were gender-neutral and not dependent on the type of position held (such as head of subject area, pastoral care coordinator). Presumably, confidence takes a long time to develop, and changes significantly over time. The level of confidence in leaders with more than 16 years' experience was nearly twice that of less experienced colleagues (mean 2.4 logits, compared to mean 1.4 logits).

4. What are the attributes of middle leadership and the influences on their framing and realisation?

The middle leadership role is typically very complex in its scope and range of responsibilities. Furthermore, the multi-dimensional nature of middle leaders' work means that they interact with many different groups and individuals within the school structure. These aspects of middle leadership position make it even more important for schools to clearly articulate the position of middle leaders within the schools' organisational community. In doing so, schools must clearly specify the expectations associated with the middle leadership role, as well as where middle leaders fit within the formal school organisational structure, and their role in whole-school development. In addition, middle leaders need to have a clear understanding of what they are accountable for, to whom they are accountable, and what the formal accountability requirements of the position are. These aspects relating to the articulation of the middle leadership role are outlined in the section that follows.

Expected functions of middle leadership

As mentioned earlier, nine functions of middle leaders were developed from the document analysis of position descriptions, which provide an overview of the role expectations relating to middle leadership positions. For each of these nine functions, several more specific responsibilities were outlined in order to provide a more detailed overview of the work and expected duties of middle leaders. The first function of middle leaders, evident from the document analysis, is the role of coordinating the educational program within their area of responsibility, be it a learning area, a pastoral or specialised program. In doing so, middle leaders are expected to design, implement and review the educational program for which they are responsible. Where relevant, middle leaders may also be required to coordinate the administration of student assessment and maintain relevant department records. The second function of middle leaders, as outlined in the document analysis, is managing the operations of the area. Within this role, middle leaders may be expected to help in the process of staff selection and to coordinate the work of their department colleagues. Middle leaders will also manage both the fiscal and physical resources of the department, as well as develop workable systems and appropriate policies for their area of responsibility. More broadly, middle leaders may also be expected to provide additional administrative support for the school's senior leaders if required.

The third function of middle leaders, as identified in the document analysis, is the need to meet the necessary accountability requirements for their role. These are discussed in further detail later in this section. Support of student learning is another central function of middle leaders, regardless of the specific focus of their position. In order to support student learning, middle leaders are expected to build a collaborative relationship with students and parents, monitor student participation in their educational program, oversee student welfare needs and build student leadership potential. The fifth function of middle leaders outlined in the qualitative phase is the need to promote effective collaboration and communication. Within this role, middle leaders are expected to work collaboratively with other school leaders and staff, to participate in school leadership meetings, to facilitate meetings within their own area of responsibility and generally, to promote collaborative working relationships within their educational program.

Another function of middle leadership positions is to assist the development of school community and culture. In this role, middle leaders work to promote the school vision and develop whole-school links by encouraging cross-curricular activities. As indicated in the literature, (Brown et al., 2000) middle leaders can also play an influential role in whole-school development. Thus, their contribution to whole-school planning and their role in helping to manage change within the school organisation are important functions of the middle leadership position. Document analysis also highlighted the expectations placed on middle leaders to promote and model professional excellence, including classroom teaching practices. Middle leaders are expected to stay abreast of current educational developments and participate in the broader educational community. Lastly, middle leaders are expected to support and encourage the department staff, providing mentorship, feedback and opportunities for professional growth.

Following on from the document analysis, the interview results from the qualitative phase led to a further categorisation of the organisational functions of middle leaders into four key areas: coordination; communication; decision-making and planning; and support. Coordination refers to the specific, day-to-day work that middle leaders undertake that leads to the smooth running of the school and the achievement of the whole-school outcomes. Depending on the focus of the position, whether it be subject-based, pastoral or specialised, middle leaders will perform a wide range of duties daily, all of which are focused on promoting the effective operation of the school. Middle leaders also play an important communication role, in which they work to build strong, collaborative relationships between various groups in the school, including students, teachers, other leaders, and members of the broader school community. Many of the middle leaders interviewed perceived their work in promoting communication within the school to be an important aspect of their role. Decision-making and planning is a third aspect of middle leaders' work, which extends beyond decision-making at the departmental level and includes their participation in whole-school development. Finally, middle leaders also play an important role in providing professional support within the school, especially to their departmental colleagues, for whom they are accountable. This might include mentoring, conducting performance reviews or supporting new or inexperienced colleagues. Overall it is clear from the findings from the qualitative phase of this

research, as well as the literature relating to the position (Brown & Rutherford; 1998, Busher and Harris 1999; White, 2002; Busher, 2005; Dinham, 2007; Gunter and Fitzgerald, 2007) that the roles of middle leaders are very diverse and comprise multiple functions.

As mentioned, the literature pertaining to middle leadership provides several models identifying the functions of middle leaders (Busher, 2005; Gunter & Fitzgerald, 2007; Dinham, 2007), some of which were outlined in Chapter Two. While these frameworks vary in the emphasis placed on the different roles of middle leaders, what is common to them and the framework derived from the document analysis is the multiplicity of functions middle leaders perform and the contexts they work within. As mentioned, a defining feature of middle leadership is the multi-dimensionality of their roles. Middle leaders not only play a central leadership role within the school, but also perform a variety of managerial and administrative duties, and in most cases, have a significant teaching load as part of the position (White, 2000). Middle leaders must, therefore, learn to balance a range of quite distinct roles and maintain a clear focus on each of the multiple aspects of their position. Another key feature of middle leadership positions is the various contexts in which middle leaders work. Busher (2005, p. 142) identifies one of the functions of middle leaders as ‘mediating contexts; engaging in arenas’. It is clear that this is one of the defining aspects of middle leadership. Regardless of their specific area of responsibility, middle leaders must liaise between and work with senior leaders, other middle leaders, classroom teachers and staff, students, parents and the broader educational community.

Formalising the articulation of middle leadership

In a traditional, hierarchical organisational structure, where the school principal holds the highest leadership position, middle leaders work between the school’s senior leaders or executive team (including positions such as Heads of School or Deputy Principals) and those staff who work solely as classroom teachers. As explained previously, middle leaders, for the purpose of this study, are defined as school staff members who are responsible for running of their educational program and for the work of other teaching or ancillary staff to the school Principal, often through the Deputy/Vice Principals. In addition to their leadership role, middle

leaders will usually have a significant teaching load. As such, middle leaders hold a dual position within the school's organisational structure, in that they function as both teacher and leader. This dual function of middle leadership, both teacher and leader, is clearly documented in the literature relating to the position (See White 2000; Mayers & Zepeda, 2002; White 2002; Busher, 2005).

The interviews undertaken with middle leaders in the qualitative phase of this study, likewise, highlighted the dual nature of middle leadership. Middle leaders work between the senior leaders and classroom teachers, and thus act as a bridge between the school's senior leaders and teaching staff, within the school organisational structure. Middle Leader Three, for example stated, "middle [leadership] is crucial because it is the link between the teacher and the administrator....We have to bring the concerns of the staff to the executive of the school". White (2000, p. 85) highlighted this bridging function of middle leaders: "Their role [Curriculum Area Middle Managers], like that of all middle managers in schools, is seen as being part-classroom teacher and part-administrator, a situation that sees them considered as the link between teachers and senior administration...". This linking position is a part of the importance and influence of middle leadership positions within the school organisation. As result of their central position within the school's organisational structure, and function as both teacher and leader, middle leaders are in a position to have direct, daily communication with many groups within the school organisation, including leaders, teaching staff and students. As such, middle leaders are believed to hold a powerful and influential position within the school structure (Weller, 2001). The role of middle leaders in whole-school development is explored in more detail later in this chapter.

Also linked to the central position of middle leaders within the school organisational structure are issues of role tensions and isolation. Middle leaders work in a position in which they are accountable to both the school's senior leaders and the program staff (Fitzgerald, 2009). This dual and divided responsibility can create a sense of conflict and isolation for middle leaders (Brown et al., 1999; Weller, 2001). Role tensions can arise for middle leaders when the opinions and decisions of the senior leaders differ from the attitudes of a middle leader's departmental colleagues. Busher et al. (2007) explain that middle leaders may experience issues of trust, if their colleagues question their loyalty to the team. In the interviews, Middle Leader

Eight articulated this sense of having to balance multiple and conflicting interests, stating, “I didn’t expect to be pulled from left, right and centre, from every direction... Everyone, a lot of the time, has got different ideas about how things should be done and there’s me in the middle. Well, who do I go with? Who’s making the right choice?”

Overall, middle leaders hold a unique position within the school organisational structure, in that their central position requires them to shift between leadership, administrative and teaching contexts. This ‘in-between’ position results in different challenges and opportunities for middle leaders as they liaise with different groups and function as intermediaries.

Accountability requirements and processes

Middle leaders are accountable to senior leaders of the school for the effective operation of their department and educational program. As a part of their role, middle leaders need to meet certain formal requirements. The qualitative phase of the study indicates the nature and frequency of these processes. One of the responsibilities of middle leaders that emerged from the document analysis of position descriptions was the need to provide senior leaders with formal records and reports, detailing the effectiveness of their area of responsibility. In many cases, middle leaders were required to prepare and submit a report outlining the work of their department, often on an annual basis. Records of student achievement in subject departments or student participation in pastoral or special departments may also be required. Middle leaders are typically also accountable for the financial management of their department, and therefore are expected to prepare, manage and present the budget and financial records to the executive or administrative staff in the school.

In addition to the presentation of reports and records as a means of accountability, middle leaders are expected to take part in staff appraisal processes. The qualitative document analysis suggests that middle leaders will assist the school’s senior leaders with the performance appraisal of program staff. This includes participating in the review of staff working within their department, as well as undergoing a review of their own performance with senior leaders. In terms of the performance review processes for middle leaders, the interview phase of the study indicated that the

accountability requirements varied significantly, and some middle leaders were unclear about the nature and frequency of the review processes relating to their position. Middle Leader One explained, “there is a staff appraisal that to my knowledge has never happened with a [subject-based middle leader]”. Similarly, Middle Leader Five was not certain of the formal review processes associated with their position: “I’m not 100 percent sure that there is an appraisal. I think obviously there is an ongoing assessment of what we do”. Thus, some of the middle leaders interviewed indicated that instead of having formalised review procedures, a more informal, ongoing appraisal process of their position took place. This might happen during regular meetings with the senior leaders: “I meet with senior staff regularly to talk about what I am doing, so there is accountability there but not in a formal sense”, Middle Leader Four commented.

The qualitative results indicate that there are accountability processes associated with the work of middle leaders, which include the provision of formal reports and records, as well as meetings with senior leaders to discuss issues relating to their program area. However, formal appraisal processes can be unclear and inconsistent. In commenting on the formalised review of middle leadership positions, Senior Leader Two explained, “a problem we have in education and always have had, is the lack of ongoing review, feedback and accountability of staff through reasonably formal processes”. These results indicate that more transparent and consistent accountability requirements, in particular performance appraisal processes, could be beneficial to middle leaders, in order to help promote more targeted and reflective practice.

Contribution to school organisational development

Middle leaders are in a position to influence the implementation of whole-school policies at the classroom level, and they have a key role in influencing organisational change within the school (Busher & Harris, 1999). Whilst middle leaders are primarily focused on leading their program area and coordinating the educational program for which they are responsible, the literature suggests that middle leaders also have the potential to play an influential role in school organisational development. Brown et al. (2000) suggest that

...the department is the key focus for change within the school and the heads of department, with responsibility for a manageable group of people, can enable successful change within the group and thus contribute to whole school improvement (p. 242).

The document analysis of middle leadership position descriptions identified middle leaders' contribution to whole-school planning and change management as a key function of their role. It was identified that middle leaders might be expected to assist senior school leaders with decision-making and planning processes, as well as be involved in the various stages of school development processes, from the planning stage to the implementation and review of school plans and policies.

The interview findings also provided insights into middle leaders' role authority and influence on school organisational development. As with the document analysis results, the interview findings highlighted the contribution middle leaders can make to decision-making and planning. Middle leaders can be seen to have several important functions in school development, including innovation, representation, consultation, and implementation. Innovation refers to the contribution middle leaders can make to whole-school planning by proposing new initiatives and educational ideas that might benefit the school organisation. Middle leaders are also seen to have an important voice in school development and decision-making, as they act not only to present their own opinions, but also to represent the ideas and viewpoints of the staff who work within their educational area. Senior Leader Three suggested that middle leaders are vital in the school planning process, in determining and representing the ideas of the program area staff. As middle leaders work closely with a range of program staff they are in a position to garner the opinions and ideas of others and then communicate these views to the senior leaders during planning or decision-making processes. Middle Leader Three commented that "middle [leadership] is crucial because it is the link between the teacher and the administrator...we have to bring the concerns of the staff to the executive of the school".

As well as having a representative function, middle leaders can take on a consultative function in school organisational development. Middle Leader One stated that, "we act as consultants towards getting the best possible outcome with the

Deputy Principal”. As experts in their program area, middle leaders can offer specific, specialised information, advice and recommendations, in order to help inform whole-school decision-making and assist senior leaders to form a “big picture” view of the school. Middle Leader Six commented, “you need a team of people. Because there are so many things that happen in the school with curriculum and pastoral care, it’s really important that you have leadership in those directions so it can flow really well”. Another central function middle leaders can perform in the process of whole-school organisational development relates to the implementation of new policies or initiatives. In the interviews with middle leaders, the idea of organisational influence arose. Middle Leader Five stated, “we’re the ones that implement the structures that come down from the senior executives”, and “we are responsible for making sure that the policies of the school are brought into the classroom”. This finding supports the literature about middle leadership, which indicates that one of the influential features of middle leaders is their ability to influence whole-school organisational change, through their influence in managing change within their specialised program areas (Brown et al., 2000).

The qualitative findings about middle leaders’ contribution to whole-school organisational development link interestingly to the survey data relating to perceptions about role authority. Role authority refers to the extent to which middle leaders have the opportunity to contribute their ideas, influence others and bring about change within the school organisation. In examining the separate analysis of the role authority facet, middle leaders found Items 9 and 8 the easiest of the seven items measuring middle leaders’ perceptions of role authority. Item 9 asked middle leaders to respond to the statement, “there are opportunities for me to voice concerns about school issues” and was the easiest for middle leaders to affirm (location -2.57 logits). Item 8 (“there are opportunities for me to contribute to whole-school planning and decision making”) was also easy to affirm, with a similarly low location of -2.26 logits. This suggests that middle leaders, on the whole, agreed that there were opportunities available to them as school leaders, in which they could express opinions and contribute to the whole-school development processes. Items 11, 10 and 13 were harder for middle leaders to agree with than Items 9 and 8, yet these items were still relatively well affirmed, with locations ranging from 0.03 logits (Item 11) and 0.28 logits (Item 10) to 0.38 logits (Item 13). These three items

relate to middle leaders' involvement in whole-school planning and decision-making, their authority to make decisions affecting other colleagues, and the degree to which middle leaders perceived that their ideas and views are taken into account. These scores indicate that on the whole, middle leaders agreed that they are involved in the process of school organisational development and have the authority to make decisions in their program area that will bring about change.

Out of the seven items measuring perceptions about role authority, Items 14 and 12 were distinctly harder for middle leaders to affirm than the other five items. Item 14 (location 1.85 logits) asked middle leaders to affirm whether they perceive that they play an influential role in whole-school organisational development. Thus, whilst middle leaders more easily affirm that they are involved in whole-school planning and that there are opportunities for them to contribute ideas during the process of whole-school development, they are less likely to affirm that this role is influential. This indicates that some middle leaders may experience limited role authority. Similarly, Item 12 ("I am consulted by the school's senior leaders about all important whole-school decisions or plans") was the hardest for middle leaders to affirm with a location of 2.29 logits. The qualitative interview findings indicate that the consultation function was one of the important roles middle leaders perform in whole-school development processes. Middle leaders might provide the school senior leaders with their perspectives and recommendations within the context of their program area to help inform the whole-school decision making processes. The quantitative findings, however, suggest that middle leaders feel that they may not always be consulted about important decisions, which again indicates a perceived lack of role authority. Similar comments were made by middle leaders during the interview phase of the study. Middle Leader One, for instance stated, "in the ideal school I think the [discipline-based middle leader] should have a lot of dialogue in so far as the direction the school goes and how things actually develop. But, in reality, it comes down to one decision and way". Middle Leader Four explained, "I know I'm a secondary level manager, so it's never really my say as to whether things happen or not, but I've got a forum to express my views". On the whole, the quantitative results indicate that middle leaders typically are involved in whole-school organisational development and have the opportunity to present their views and opinions. However, middle leaders may perceive that they have limited

influence over whole-school decisions and plans. Limited role authority may result in middle leaders feeling frustrated or under-valued within the school community.

Thus, while middle leaders might feel as though they may not directly influence whole-school decision and planning, due to their intermediary position within the school organisational structure, they may have a strong influence at the implementation phase of school decisions and policies, and can influence the process of change within the school (Busher & Harris, 1999). Along with contributing their own ideas and views, middle leaders perform a consultative and representative function in the whole-school development process, helping to provide senior leaders with information and perspectives relating to their program area. Middle leaders also have a direct influence on the implementation of new school policies and processes. As school leaders, middle leaders perceive that there are opportunities through which they can participate in whole-school organisational development, but they question their degree of influence within the school and may feel as though they are not always consulted during the school-decision making process. These ideas reflect the literature about middle leadership positions, which suggest that middle leaders can play an important role in whole-school improvement, but that schools may under-utilise or under-value middle leaders' potential contribution (White, 2000).

5. How can middle leadership be developed?

It is clear that middle leaders can play a central and important role within a school's operation and development. Given the importance of middle leaders in the efficient and effective running of a school and the potential influence of the position, consideration needs to be given to the ways in which schools can develop and better support the work of middle leaders. This next section explores the professional development needs of middle leaders and examines the ways in which these needs may be met. Additionally, key areas for the growth of secondary school middle leadership positions are discussed.

Professional development needs

Examining the qualitative interview results, some of the middle leaders commented on the difficulties they faced in the transition from classroom teacher to middle

leader. Middle Leader One explained that a lack of clear expectations and direction for the position meant that the movement into middle leadership was uncertain: “I was never actually given any formal instructions as to, ‘these are your new roles’”. Similarly, Middle Leader Five reported feeling overwhelmed as a new middle leader: “I started with feeling overwhelmed and feeling like I’ve got all of this pressure and all this work on me”. These transitional experiences perhaps highlight the need for greater support of middle leaders through professional development opportunities. The professional development needs of middle leaders include the instruction they receive prior to taking on the position, or as a beginning middle leader, to help prepare them for the new responsibilities and duties that will be required of them. It also includes the ongoing professional learning opportunities available to middle leaders, which are designed to provide continued support and development. The findings from the interviews suggest that more targeted professional learning opportunities are required to assist middle leaders with developing the specific skills required for their leadership role. Middle leaders commented that much of the professional development they had been involved in was not specifically focused on the needs of middle leaders. Middle Leader Four, for example, commented: “There’s a lot of good [professional learning] out there but it is sort of removed from what we are doing”.

The findings from the quantitative survey of middle leaders also provide some insight into their professional learning needs. In this survey, the facet of role support, in part, measures middle leaders’ perception about professional learning. In the separate analyses of the five facets, Item 18, “I have been provided with ongoing professional learning opportunities”, was easily affirmed by middle leaders with a location of -0.61. This indicates that the participating middle leaders felt that professional learning opportunities were available to them, in support of their role. Item 19 asked middle leaders about the perceived relevance and specificity of the professional learning opportunities (“The professional learning I have undertaken has been relevant and specific to my work as a middle leader”). The location for Item 19 was 0.17 logits using the separate analyses of facets, indicating that this item was harder for middle leaders to affirm. Likewise, using the combined analysis of facets, the item location of 1.06 logits for Item 19 indicates that it ranks as one of the harder items on the scale. This result reflects the interview findings about the nature of

professional development offered to middle leaders, and may suggest the need for more programs designed specifically to meet their needs. Item 17 also relates to the professional development of middle leaders, in particular their professional preparation: “I have been provided with adequate training”. This item was even more difficult for middle leaders to affirm, with a location score of 0.41 logits on the separate analysis of the facet. This too indicates the need for relevant, timely professional learning opportunities for middle leaders.

In the interview stage of the study, middle leaders were asked to identify the main skills and understandings they felt would be useful in a professional learning course aimed at middle leaders. Five main skill sets were outlined by the middle leaders as being relevant and useful for their development: time management and personal organisation skills; budgeting and administrative skills; information and communication technology skills; interpersonal skills and conflict management; and problem solving and lateral thinking skills. Ongoing professional learning relating to educational directions and current professional knowledge was also identified as being relevant to the professional learning needs of middle leaders. The literature on leadership courses indicates that professional development for school leaders should focus on developing both leadership and managerial skills (Hallinger & Snidvongs, 2008; Glatter, 2009). Glatter (2009) identified creativity, adaptability and analytical skills as being vital for modern school leaders. Turner (2006) suggested that emotional learning is important to help middle leaders develop the personal skills to cope with the pressures of leadership. Thus, a balanced professional development course which addresses the technical, creative, ethical and personal skills of middle leaders is needed to fully prepare them for their leadership duties (Woods et al., 2009).

The interview findings suggest that much of middle leaders’ development takes place informally through professional experience prior to commencing the position, or in a ‘hands on’ manner whilst undertaking the role. In discussing how prior professional experience influenced their work, Middle Leader Seven commented, “it [the transition] has been comfortable because I taught for twenty years before I started doing it [middle leadership]. So I had experienced all levels of a school before. I knew the pitfalls and things not to do and things I wanted to do”. Previous professional experience as a classroom teacher or in other fields is evidently central

to the development of middle leaders. However, not all educators who are promoted to middle leadership positions have lengthy classroom experience, and thus more formalised professional learning opportunities are required to help with the transition into leadership. Likewise, the interview findings indicate that middle leaders learn many of the skills and understandings required for effective middle leadership through their day-to-day experiences in the position. Middle Leader Six, for example, stated:

A lot of what you do in this job, you learn on the go and fortunately people are very good here and you just have to ask, ‘what do I do now?’ And that’s what happened when I first started the job

The literature relating to leadership training also indicates that leadership skills are often learnt in an informal manner through professional experiences. Considering middle leaders specifically, Turner (2000) identified that middle leaders’ previous professional experiences were important in preparing them for the leadership role. Middle leaders reflect back on their own professional experiences, as well as what they have observed of other middle leaders, when carrying out their role (Turner, 2000).

Professional development opportunities are important in preparing aspirant middle leaders for the work that is expected of them. Schools also need to consider how best to develop the long-term, future leadership potential of the school (Rhodes et al., 2008). Several of the middle leaders interviewed indicated that they had aspirations to pursue higher levels of leadership within the school organisation throughout their career. When discussing career aspirations, Middle Leader One commented: “I would like to operate at a higher level of [leadership], but I don’t desire that out of a sense of professional ambition, it’s just where I can help in the next role”. Likewise, Middle Leader Six also had aspirations to take on a senior leadership position in the future: “I think that in a couple of years’ time I would like to go up to the next level and be a Head of School or Deputy [Principal]”. For some, middle leadership was a step towards more senior school leadership positions in the future. The professional development offered to middle leaders, therefore, must take into account the needs of middle leaders, not just in their current position, but also the skills and

understandings required to develop their leadership potential for future professional roles.

The combined findings suggest that middle leaders are seeking professional development to help them in their role, yet may require more targeted courses aimed at the specific needs of their position. In particular, middle leaders desire instruction in the areas of information technology, administration, communication, problem-solving and personal management. The professional development of middle leaders tends to be informal in nature, with much of the learning being derived from past professional experiences and skills learnt whilst in the position. The professional development of middle leaders should be designed to promote skills which support them in their current leadership role, as well as having a long-term focus of developing overall leadership potential. This will help to prepare middle leaders for more senior leadership positions in the future, if that is where their career aspirations lie.

Meeting the professional development needs

The process of leadership development can be undertaken through both formal and informal programs and activities. Formal learning includes participation in courses, action research and other structured activities. Informal learning might involve reflective practices, mentoring and observation (Scott & Webber, 2008). As mentioned previously, Turner (2000) in a study of subject-based middle leaders, identified that these middle leaders acquired much of their professional learning, informally and implicitly through experiential learning and professional socialisation, drawing on their own experiences and observations of other colleagues to inform their work. Turner (2006, p. 433), again in a study of subject middle leaders, indicates that this type of informal learning is central to the professional development of middle leaders, explaining that “...more attention from senior managers in schools needs to be paid to the precise nature of what, when and how [informal learning] is taking place”. Professional learning activities such as mentoring, the provision of professional feedback and reflective practices can be useful in allowing middle leader to draw upon their professional experiences and extract the skills and understandings that will help them in their leadership role.

Often middle leaders come into the position with many years' experience in education or other professions. The interview findings suggest that middle leaders felt that their teaching experience had prepared them for much of the work required of them as middle leaders. Middle Leader Three, for example, stated, "in some ways it [the transition to middle leadership] is easy, because you are still teaching. And as you became an experienced teacher you've picked up a lot of what was needed to be a good [middle leader]". Glatter (2009, p. 228) acknowledges that experiential learning is a core part of leadership development, but explains that this alone is not enough to help support educational leaders: "Raw experience is not a sufficient guide to learning...". Likewise, Weller (2001, p. 80) claims: "Neither 'learning on the job' nor 'doing as the predecessors did' constitutes adequate training for effective job performance or for the preparation needed to perform their [department heads] leadership responsibilities". Thus, schools need to look at ways in which the 'raw experiences' of middle leaders can be transformed into useful, accessible skills and information. The interview results from the qualitative phase of the study support the importance of informal learning activities in the professional development of middle leaders. In particular, the opportunity to access professional mentoring was seen to be very important for the development and support of middle leaders. Middle Leader Four commented that "having mentors who have walked [the path] before and have actually tried things out is one of the most useful forms of professional development". Structured, regular mentoring sessions for middle leaders, particularly in the early stages of their leadership experience, would be useful in helping them to build skills and strategies to manage their work and develop their leadership capacity.

Along with the more informal approaches to professional development, middle leaders also benefit from structured courses and activities. As previously indicated, the interview results highlighted the need for greater professional learning opportunities, targeted specifically at the needs of middle leaders, and taking into account different levels of experience and career aspirations. Busch et al. (2005), in examining the formation experiences of potential educational leaders, found that through taking part in more formalised educational programs, the participants were more interested in participating in subsequent leadership instruction and in becoming involved in more school leadership responsibilities. Such programs would provide

the necessary professional support for middle leaders at varying stages of their career, and would also assist in developing the broader leadership potential of the school. Professional learning for middle leaders also needs to reflect the ever-changing demands of the role. Middle Leader Three commented: “They [middle leaders] don’t get enough professional development to reflect the change in their job over the years”. Professional learning courses, therefore, need to provide for the varied and dynamic nature of middle leadership, and take into account the real world challenges facing middle leaders in the school environment. Several of the middle leaders interviewed were completing academic studies, such as a Masters degree, as a form of professional development. Middle Leader Six, for instance, commented that, “I have, out of my own choice, I’ve started this Masters in leadership and management, and this really enhanced my role. I’ve been able to use what I’m doing at school as a part of my study quite often, and it has direct relationship to what I do at school”.

Some of the middle leaders had participated in leadership courses or taken a proactive approach by personally seeking relevant professional information. For instance, Middle Leader One, who had not participated in formal leadership training, commented that, “I read what I can to help me in this position”. What these findings indicate is that middle leaders desire access to relevant professional learning to help them further develop the skills and knowledge needed to be highly effective in their position. Middle leaders access this information through varied avenues, including mentoring, leadership courses, academic study, self-training. Their selection and involvement in professional learning depended on the opportunities available to them individually and on limitations such as time and budget.

The findings show that middle leadership should be provided with varying forms of professional learning opportunities, both formal and informal, specifically targeted to their leadership needs. Professional development opportunities for middle leaders should be available in the early transitional phase of their career, and be staged to provide ongoing professional support throughout their time in the position. Furthermore, professional learning for middle leaders needs to take into account the career experiences and aspirations of middle leaders, the dynamic and shifting challenges facing them, and frequently, the limited time available to participate in professional learning. Overall, Bush and Glover (2005, p. 237), in considering the

leadership development needs of educators, suggest that leaders would benefit from having the opportunity to be involved in a range of professional learning opportunities, both formal and informal: “A judicious blend of theory, research and participants’ experience, customised to meet the specific requirements of each client group, provides the best prospect of successful leadership development in education”.

Development of middle leadership

Having conducted an examination of middle leadership positions, seven key areas for growth and change can be identified. These are listed below and discussed in the sections that follow:

1. Development of clear expectations and a school-wide understanding of the position
2. Strengthening the influence of middle leaders on whole-school development
3. Opportunities for leadership and management training
4. The need for peer support initiatives
5. Consistent performance appraisal and feedback processes
6. A focus on collaboration between middle and senior level school leaders
7. Recognition of the position within the school and educational community.

Clear role expectations

When examining the quantitative data, using the combined analysis of the five facets measured on a single scale, the facet relating to role clarity was the second most difficult set of items on the survey for middle leaders to affirm, with a mean location score of 0.76 logits. Of these items, three in particular were harder for middle leaders to agree with: Item 3 (“My position duties and expectations are clearly defined”); Item 2 (“The duties and expectations of my position are documented in a written position description); and Item 7 (“There is a deep and detailed understanding of the role throughout the school community”). Each of these items had a score above 0.9 logits on the combined analysis of facets, with Item 7 being significantly harder to

affirm with a score of 1.87 logits. These results indicate that the issue of role clarity is noticeably problematic for some middle leaders, in that they perceive that their colleagues and school community lack a clear, deep understanding of their role within the school organisation.

In order to address this issue, work needs to be done to carefully communicate the duties and expectations of middle leaders within a school. Written position descriptions were noted by some of the middle leaders interviewed as being one of the ways in which middle leaders can develop a sense of role clarity. However, it was acknowledged that such documents were often limiting, with the scope of a middle leaders' role being too broad to be fully captured in a definitive written statement. In preparing formalised descriptions of middle leadership positions, the type of middle leadership role being carried out needs to be considered and specific roles descriptions for subject, pastoral or specialist leaders need to be developed. The possibility of tailoring the position description to allow for the specific goals and focus of each individual middle leader might also be considered. Middle leader Seven commented on the need for a degree of flexibility and differentiation when developing a position description for middle leaders:

I think the other advantage I've had is that the roles have never really been defined and I've been able to define the role myself. So that's been effective in the sense that I've never walked into these roles with 'you've got to do it this way', which is an advantage. I think I'd find that really hard.

Similarly, Senior Leader Three reiterated the need for position descriptions that clearly outline the set expectations of a middle leader's role, whilst still leaving space for individual leaders to define for themselves the goals and focus they wish to pursue. Senior Leader Three explained: "You don't want to dot every 'I' and cross every 'T'...there has to be a degree left open", and elaborated further: "As long as [middle leaders] have clear expectations of what the 'non-negotiables' are and they have clear support and know there's a level of trust and professionalism".

The definition of middle leadership roles needs to be regularly reviewed and updated, in order to account for the dynamic nature of the position. This is also reflective of the literature, with Weller (2001, p. 80) commenting that the position descriptions of school department heads "...should be updated to accurately reflect

the duties and responsibilities that department heads are called upon to perform. Department heads' responsibilities are often expanded over those that are actually stated in job descriptions". The demands placed on middle leaders often do not remain static from year to year, with the work of middle leaders evolving over time to meet the changing needs of their school. Middle Leader Seven, for example, commented on the nature of their role: "It's a very loose position. It's sort of evolved as needed". Senior Leader Three also indicated that middle leadership positions shift over time: "There certainly was a time when you could have just walked into a faculty and done the business.... I think it's far more dynamic now". What this means for middle leaders is the need for an ongoing review and reshaping of their position descriptions on a regular basis, to ensure that it captures their changing focuses and goals over time. Whilst many of their responsibilities will be fixed, the role descriptions need to account for the changing nature of a middle leader's work, as well as their individualised goals. A regular dialogue and redefinition of the work and responsibilities of middle leaders within the school organisation could help to improve the level of role clarity surrounding middle leadership positions.

A focus on leadership

The literature relating to middle leadership positions explores the potential influence of middle leaders and the contribution they could make to whole-school planning and development. Yet paradoxically, the literature also suggests that the leadership potential of middle leaders within schools is often under-utilised, and that they experience limited role authority (Weller, 2001; Dinham, 2007). Weller (2001, p. 80) claims that "the lack of line authority and an active voice in school-wide decisions are two areas that conspire to thwart the effectiveness of the role of department head". Likewise, the findings of this research indicate that some middle leaders perceive that they have limited influence or role authority within their position. In the single facet analysis of the survey data, Items 12 and 14, which measure perceived levels of role authority, were identified as being more difficult for middle leaders to agree with than the other five items in the facet. Item 14, "I play an influential role in whole-school development", had a location of 1.85 logits. Item 12, "I am consulted by the school's senior leaders about all important whole-school

decisions of plans”, was the most difficult item within the facet of role authority, with a location of 2.29 logits. This indicates that some middle leaders view their whole-school leadership role as being somewhat limited. Some of the middle leaders interviewed suggested the need for more collaborative leadership structures within schools, whereby middle leaders could play a more direct role in influencing whole-school decisions. Middle Leader One commented that in promoting the middle leadership position, “you just have to involve them [middle leaders] more in part of the management process. Rather than having just a top-down [leadership model], have it going up and down”. Middle Leader Six also commented on the perceived limited role authority of middle leaders:

Whole school policies are a big influence and as I said there are some policies that are chiefly made up by the executive team and we don’t have any say in them. And we can make suggestions but as far as I can see those suggestions aren’t taken on board. That’s one of the frustrating roles we have.

The interview and survey results suggest that middle leaders, whilst having opportunities to voice their ideas about whole-school issues and plans, may feel as though their leadership role within the school is limited. Thus, if schools are to benefit from the broad leadership skills and capacity of middle leaders, they must explore ways to extend real influence and authority to those staff members in middle leadership positions. This might be achieved through the development of more collaborative decision-making strategies.

Another barrier to middle leaders’ involvement in whole-school leadership is the very broad scope of their job description and time constraints. Middle leaders, typically, have a significant teaching load, in addition to their work as a leader within their department. Several of the middle leaders interviewed commented on the demands of their day-to-day work. Middle Leader Three, for instance, stated, “there [are] not enough people to do the work that the job requires”. Middle Leader Eight also commented that limited staff influenced the demands of their work, saying “...we are still expected to do all these things, but we don’t have as many staff to assist us with that. So our roles are very, very demanding”. Likewise, Senior Leader Two commented that, “in an ideal world they [middle leaders] would be teaching less and have more time allocated for them to complete all of their tasks. I think that

they're struggling with their current workload to do a good job because they simply don't have the time". The demanding workloads of middle leaders may place limitations on their ability to become deeply involved in whole-school matters. Middle leaders make up a group of experienced and knowledgeable educators within schools, whose contribution to whole-school development is highly valuable and unique in the specialised perspectives they can offer. Whilst middle leaders play an important role in the operational function of school, their leadership function is also vital. In some cases there may need to be a re-prioritising of the work of middle leaders, allowing greater scope for leadership responsibilities. Additional time or assistance to complete day-to-day administrative duties may also allow middle leaders the opportunity to explore bigger picture issues.

Leadership training

With middle leaders playing a very central role within the school organisation, it is important that they receive quality support and regular opportunities for professional learning in the area of leadership and management. As mentioned earlier, the interview results suggest that middle leaders often come into the position with rich professional experience but without formal instruction in the area of leadership. Middle Leader Two, for instance, commented that, "middle leaders definitely need to have something [professional learning] put in place, similar to what you would in the executive area". Given the very demanding nature of middle leaders' work and, in many ways, the quite distinct responsibilities from those of a classroom teacher, it is clear that middle leaders need to be well-supported through the provision of directed leadership preparation and development courses. Since middle leadership positions are in some cases a starting point to more senior leadership positions in the school, access to leadership instruction or other forms of professional development specifically designed to support the work of middle leaders is important in helping to strengthen the future leadership capacity of the school. Rhodes et al. (2008, p. 312) comment that it is important for schools to focus on "...taking a longer term view so that future leadership needs can be addressed. It also involves well-targeted career development for talented individuals and senior staff working together to recognize the leadership potential of others".

The need for peer support

In conjunction with targeted, formalised leadership instruction, middle leaders might also benefit from peer support initiatives, such as mentoring programs. In particular, less experienced middle leaders, who are at the transitional phase from classroom teacher to middle leader, could draw on the support and knowledge of their colleagues who have held a middle leadership position longer. Turner (2006) comments on the importance of peer mentors for educators who are new to middle leadership, saying:

Equally, it would seem to be very important for inexperienced subject leaders to have the benefit of feedback and advice from more experienced mentors who can also act as positive role models in their specific working context. The challenge for those working with inexperienced subject leaders may well lie in attempting to make explicit what otherwise has been learned implicitly (p. 433).

In the interview stage of the study, Middle Leader Eight commented on the benefit of peer mentoring for middle leaders, and observed:

I think there needs to be more of a mentoring program within the school. Maybe the person who is taking over a job comes in for a couple of weeks before taking over the role, just to see how the department runs, because there's got to be a handover [period].

Peer mentoring for middle leaders, may also reduce the sense of isolation some middle leaders experience in their role. Middle Leader Four, for instance, commented that, "I do feel in some respects that I'm a little bit on my own. Everyone's always really busy". Regular opportunities to meet with other middle leaders, in order to discuss common experiences and issues, could also promote reflective practice, which was seen to be a key factor in effectively meeting the demands of middle leadership position. Middle Leader Four, for example, commented that, "there's a real learning curve and I think you need to glean off what everyone else around you [is doing]". However, Scott and Webber (2008) comment that peer mentoring and a reliance on informal or experiential learning practices alone are not enough to prepare middle leaders or support them in their work. These

forms of professional learning and support need to be coupled with opportunities for more formal instruction. Scott and Webber (2008) state that:

...too frequently leaders are not provided or indeed expected to access ongoing systematic professional development other than *ad hoc*, hit-and-miss on the job learning. With the dynamic nature of today's workplace, experiential opportunities alone are inadequate to meet the complexities of leaders' work and personal lives (p. 773).

Consistent appraisal and feedback processes

Another finding which has emerged from the study has been the need for more consistent performance appraisal processes for middle leaders, in order to provide them with regular feedback about their work. During the interview phase of the study, some middle leaders commented on the lack of consistent appraisal processes. As previously examined, several of the middle leaders commented that the performance review processes within their school were more informal or inconsistent. Yet, opportunities for performance review were seen by the school leaders interviewed to be important in supporting middle leaders in their work.

Examining the results from the quantitative survey, with a focus on the separate analysis of items measuring role value, there were two key statements middle leaders had much difficulty affirming. These two statements relate to the degree to which middle leaders felt that their work was acknowledged and affirmed within their school. Item 30, "my work is recognised by the school community as being vital to the school's operation and school performance", had a comparably high location of 1.83 logits using the separate analysis. Similarly, Item 29, "my work is regularly acknowledged by members of the school community", was also more difficult for middle leaders to affirm, with a location of 2.37 logits. Given that the location scores for these items were relatively high, it might be concluded that some middle leaders feel the need for a greater recognition of their contribution to the school. The presence of consistent and regular staff appraisal processes within schools would provide opportunities for middle leaders not only to receive constructive feedback

about their work, but also, importantly, to have their contributions more formally recognised by school leaders and the school community.

Turner (2006) explains that reflective practices are necessary for the professional growth of subject leaders as middle leaders:

For an inexperienced subject leader, the learning required for her/his new role can be a steep learning curve based as much on anything else as learning by trial and error. However, the ability to reflect on and analyse practice is vital... (p. 426).

Participation in performance review processes can prompt middle leaders to engage in reflective practices. In examining the development of subject leaders' professional knowledge, Turner (2006) suggests that in developing *control knowledge*:

Subject leaders become more aware of their own strengths and weaknesses while in post. Such knowledge may well largely be acquired implicitly but can become more explicit when, for example, the line manager engages the subject leader in a review process of the ways in which the department is being led and managed (p. 422).

Thus, the existence of regular review processes for middle leaders may help to strengthen their sense of role value, by providing the opportunity for school leaders and school community members to acknowledge the positive work of middle leaders. Furthermore, it might help to promote reflective practices, allowing middle leaders to more explicitly recognise their own strengths, the factors that influence their work and the skills or knowledge they wish to develop.

Collaboration with other school leaders

Another apparent paradox of middle leadership is that whilst middle leaders work between different groups of teaching and leadership staff within the school, some middle leaders reported feeling quite isolated in their work. During the interview phase, Middle Leader Four explained, "that's one of the frustrations. Feeling that sense of being a little too isolated and being too autonomous". Middle Leader Four also commented, "I do feel in some respects that I'm a little bit on my own.

Everyone's always really busy". In order to better support middle leaders in their work, the need for more communication and collaboration between school leaders was seen to be important. This might involve more opportunities for middle leaders to communicate with other colleagues holding middle leadership positions within the school, to discuss specific concerns, share common experiences or collaborate on leadership initiatives. When asked what they felt was needed to better support middle leaders in their role, Middle Leader Four suggested the need for more opportunities to work with other middle leaders in the school, and commented: "I feel like there are issues that I'd like to discuss regarding the welfare of the school and I think we're [middle leaders] not meeting enough to really effectively address those issues". Likewise, Middle Leader Nine explained the importance of having opportunities to work with other school leaders: "If you're trying to work in isolation or if you don't have regular meetings where you can get together and discuss the bigger issues it could be a difficult job".

Regular opportunities, both formal and informal, for individual middle leaders to meet with other school leaders are important for the support of middle leaders, as well as for promoting effective shared leadership within the school community. Additionally, greater opportunities for middle leaders to collaborate with other school leaders can strengthen school decision-making processes. Middle Leader Four commented on the value of having a greater focus on collaborative leadership: "I think having a more collaborative approach would be better in a sense. It would take pressure off you a little bit and give you direction and wisdom in decision making". Lack of time was seen to be a key obstacle standing in the way of improved communication and collaboration between middle leaders. Middle Leader One, for instance, commented on the need to prioritise time for middle leaders to connect within the school: "I would create more forums for discussion, for future planning at a middle [leadership] level. And I would liberate specific time, during school time for that to happen". Thus, there may be a need for schools to organise regular opportunities for middle leaders to meet and discuss school leadership issues with other middle leaders, as well as the opportunity to work more collaboratively with the senior leaders of a school.

Recognition of the position

The middle leaders and senior leaders interviewed for this study were most definitely in consensus about the vital role middle leaders play within the school organisation. There was a recognition that the schools could not function effectively without the work carried out by middle leaders. Despite a shared understanding of the importance of middle leadership positions within school, what appeared contradictory was the perception that middle leaders' work was under-appreciated or not acknowledged within the school and broader educational community. Middle Leader One, for example, observed:

There doesn't seem to be lot of care for people in my position... Principals often get the focus and they certainly get financially cared for and the teachers are supported, but it's the middle [leaders who] often seem to get left waving in the breeze.

Middle Leader Nine also commented: "There is a need to definitely recognise the role of [middle leaders] more significantly". Thus, there is a discrepancy between the perceived value of middle leadership and the recognition received by middle leaders for their work. This was also evident in the survey of middle leaders, with respondents easily affirming items relating to their perceived value of the role. Item 25 "I see my role as being beneficial to the day-to-day functioning of my school" had a significantly low location of -2.79 logits, using the analysis of separate facets. This indicates that middle leaders found this item very easy to affirm. Likewise, Item 24, "I believe that my role is worthwhile" also had a low location of -2.64 logits. Yet Item 29, "my work is regularly acknowledged by member of the school community", was much more difficult for middle leaders to affirm, with a location of 2.37 logits. What this indicates is a gap between the perceived importance of the middle leadership role and the perceived level of recognition middle leaders received for their work.

In order for middle leadership positions to be seen as attractive promotional opportunities for educators, and for middle leaders to feel acknowledged for the work they achieve in their role, schools need to look for ways to more fully recognise the work of middle leaders within the school organisation. This might include: the provision of broader leadership opportunities; more direct and

personalised feedback about their performance through performance review processes; increased time allowances to pursue further studies or professional learning opportunities; greater financial remuneration; increased autonomy to make decisions or plans relating to their role; and individualised recognition of the work of middle leaders in whole-school community forums or school publications.

Implications of the development of middle leadership positions

The seven areas discussed above that relate to the growth and development of secondary school middle leadership positions are important in improving levels of role clarity, role authority, role support, role value and role fulfilment. Improved role clarity could be achieved through the development of clearer expectations relating to middle leadership positions, and a focus on developing a consistent, school-wide understanding of the role. Role authority can be developed through a focus on strengthening the influence of middle leaders in whole-school development and promoting greater collaboration between all school leaders. Levels of role support for middle leaders could be improved by increasing opportunities for middle leaders to be involved in targeted leadership and management development courses, peer support initiatives such as mentoring programs, and the opportunity to be involved in regular and constructive performance review process. Likewise, more formalised performance review processes, along with improved opportunities for communication and collaboration between school leaders and greater recognition of the work of middle leaders, might help to improve perceptions relating to role value. Finally, a combined focus on improving levels of role clarity, authority, support and value could have a positive impact of the overall sense of fulfilment that middle leaders derive from their work. There is a definite need to develop the middle leadership position, in order to: allow for a smoother transition from classroom teaching to middle leadership duties; improve professional learning opportunities for middle leaders; reduce the pressure and frustrations felt by some middle leaders; increase the role fulfilment of middle leaders; and build leadership capacity within schools.

Implications for schools

Middle leadership is a critical and influential position within schools. The work of middle leaders is vital, in that they liaise between key groups within the school community, and are responsible for communicating and negotiating the ideas, suggestions and concerns of others, acting as a 'voice' within the school context. Middle leaders have the ability to impact change processes and the implementation of broader school policies within their area of responsibility, and thus they can have a direct influence on the successful realisation of whole school plans and policies. There is little question about the worth of middle leadership positions within the secondary school environment, and because of this the needs and limitations of middle leaders should be given close attention by schools and the broader educational profession.

One area school leaders should consider when seeking to promote middle leadership positions within their school context is the degree to which the distinct roles and responsibilities of middle leaders are clearly defined, delineated and documented. In particular, schools need to ensure that the scope and purpose of newly developed middle leadership positions are formally articulated and that position descriptions for established middle leadership positions, such as subject leaders, are regularly reviewed and refined to account for the shifting demands these positions overtime. By developing a clear, up-to-date and consistent understanding of the duties and expectations relating to specific middle leadership positions, schools are able to more readily identify and address any ambiguities or inconsistencies within middle leadership roles, such as the over-lapping of duties. Furthermore, by observing changes to the nature of middle leadership positions over time, more targeted professional development can be sought and undertaken to help middle leaders develop the new skills and knowledge they need to meet the ongoing demands of their role.

One significant outcome of this research has been the construction of an instrument that measures middle leaders' role perceptions. At a school level, the instrument could be used by senior leaders to conduct an examination of the experiences and needs of middle leadership staff within their school. This would allow schools to develop a clear understanding of the individual perceptions and requirements of

middle leaders within the unique context of their school. Thus, it could help schools to identify the specific limitations and support needs of middle leaders that are relevant to their individual school environments. This might clarify and inform: the need for stronger mentoring or induction programs for new middle leaders; opportunities for more collaboration and discussion at the middle level of leadership within the school; the provision of ongoing professional learning and leadership development opportunities for middle leaders; the availability of necessary resources and support structures for middle leaders; the clarity and effectiveness of performance review and feedback procedures for middle leaders; the recognition of the work of middle leaders within the school community; and the involvement of middle leadership in whole school development. Such a review would identify the ways in which a school is already successfully responding to the needs of middle leaders, and the areas which might need additional attention. Having recognised the individual needs of middle leaders within the school context and reviewed current support structures, schools might then plan for the changes needed to better support and develop the work of middle leaders within their own school context.

There also is a need for schools and the broader education profession to monitor the changing nature of middle leadership roles and duties, aiming to ensure that the support provided to middle leaders remains current and relevant, and equips middle leaders with the skills needed to address new or changing aspects of their roles. More broadly, there may be a need to promote the development of leadership skills from the early stages of a teacher's career, in order for educators to be able to transition into a formal school leadership role with greater confidence. A focus on the career aspirations of middle leaders, with a view to encouraging ongoing leadership development and involvement in whole-school leadership activities, could also help to enrich the experience of middle leaders. If middle leadership positions are to be perceived as attractive and highly-valued roles within the school organisation, there is a need to explore ways to better promote and support current middle leaders in schools.

Implications for further research

The focus of this study has been broad, aiming to present an examination of the core functions, issues and factors influencing the work of middle leaders within the context of Western Australian secondary schools. There are some specific issues arising from the study which could provide the focus of future research projects. One area that requires further research relates to the formal professional development opportunities available to middle leaders within the Western Australian, or more broadly, the Australian context. An examination of the types of professional learning courses and activities available to middle leaders, including the content and accessibility of such courses, would be useful, with a focus on those courses designed specifically to target the needs of middle leaders. In addition to this, future research might explore the impact or influence that participation in formal, targeted professional learning courses has on the daily work, professional experiences and goals and career pathway of middle leaders.

From the findings of this study, several key areas for the growth of middle leadership positions were identified. Further research might examine how middle leaders' role perceptions are impacted if specific focus is given to addressing one or more of these areas. Future research could explore the results of any specific changes made to support or develop the role of middle leaders in schools. Thus, a longer-term study into the role perceptions of middle leaders could provide more information about the extent to which middle leaders' role perceptions change over time, and the factors which influence middle leaders' perceptions of their work. A longer term or more extensive exploration of the pressures and expectations facing middle leaders might also be considered, examining how middle leaders adapt, react and respond to the dynamic nature of their work. Alternatively, a longer study exploring the career stages of middle leaders, specifically considering the specific needs and experiences of less experienced middle leaders compared to those of more experienced school leaders, could also provide some useful insights into the professional growth and experiences of educational leaders.

Additionally, further research into the influence of middle leadership within the school organisation could provide more in-depth findings about the contribution of middle leaders in whole school development processes and the impact of their work

on school improvement, as well as their wider influence on the educational community. With a broader focus on the concept of distributed leadership, future research might also examine the ways in which formalised middle leadership positions function within a wider structure and culture of shared leadership in a school organisation. Finally, the development of a quantitative instrument measuring middle leaders' perceptions of their role is significant and potentially has a broader application in the development of similar instruments to measure the role perceptions of school leaders or educators holding positions outside of middle leadership.

Conclusion

Through this research study, a measurement of the role perceptions of middle leaders was developed, with the construction of a 36 item survey instrument. The instrument was designed to examine middle leaders' attitudes about five sub-constructs: role clarity; role authority; role support; role values; and role fulfilment. Additionally, through a process of document analysis, nine core functions of middle leadership were outlined. The research findings indicate that middle leaders affirmed that they received the necessary support required for them to carry out their work, yet the findings suggest that there could be more opportunities for more specific and relevant professional development courses to be made available to middle leaders. Peer support initiatives such as mentoring, and in some cases, greater allocation of non-teaching time or program budget would support middle leaders in their work. Item 7 on the survey instrument relating to role clarity was the most difficult item for middle leaders to affirm. This suggests the need for a more detailed and consistent understanding of middle leaders' work to be developed across the school community. The development of clear and flexible position descriptions that are reviewed regularly to meet the changing demands on middle leaders would help to create a clearer understanding of middle leadership positions within schools.

In relation to the issue of role authority, the findings indicate that middle leaders do have opportunities to be involved and have a voice in school decision-making and planning, yet there is a perception that middle leaders are not influential in whole-school development. Given that middle leaders represent a highly skilled and

experienced group of educators, schools need to explore ways to more fully involve middle leaders in the processes of whole-school development and, where appropriate, extend additional authority and influence to middle leaders. The findings related to the issue of role value indicate that school leaders perceive that the work of middle leaders is vital to the effective, day-to-day running of the school. Yet, despite the perceived value of their role, middle leaders may feel under-acknowledged or overlooked in the school organisation. Schools may need to examine ways in which middle leadership positions can be promoted within the school. Options such as more regular opportunities for feedback and performance reviews could be looked at as ways to develop a greater recognition of the work of middle leaders. Overall, middle leaders held mostly positive perceptions about their role and showed strong levels of role fulfilment. This indicates that most middle leaders enjoy the work that their position encompasses and find a sense of achievement in meeting the challenges of the role.

Overall, this study has provided an examination of the organisational functions of middle leaders, the nature of middle leadership positions in secondary schools, and school leaders' perceptions of the middle leadership position. The study has also presented a detailed exploration of the factors that influence the work of middle leaders and has quantified the perceptions middle leaders hold about their work through the design and administration of a survey instrument. The results of this study provide insights into the vital work of middle leaders. It has outlined ways in which secondary school middle leadership positions can be further supported and developed, to ensure that secondary schools gain from the experience, innovation and insight of middle leaders.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR MIDDLE LEADERS

1. Could you please start by explaining where you see your role as a middle leader fitting within the school's organisational structure? (Clarification: Who you are accountable to and who you are responsible for?)
2. As a middle leader, what are you broadly responsible for within the school?
3. What are the specific duties involved in each of these areas of responsibility?
4. What are the accountability requirements and processes associated with your middle leadership position?
5. To what extent do you see your role as a middle leader contributing to whole-school organisational development? Please explain the nature of your contribution.
6. How significant do you believe middle leadership positions are for the school?
7. What do you consider to be the most important function of your position as a middle leader? Why is this?
8. As a middle leader, what types of jobs or roles do you take on, that others may not see?
9. If any, what alterations or modifications would you make to your position description as a middle leader?
10. To what extent do you feel your duties and expectations as a middle leader are clear or defined?
11. What limitations or difficulties do you feel you face in your position as a middle leader?

12. What factors influence the work you do? The way you work?
13. To what extent do you feel the duties and expectations of middle leaders are achievable and/or appropriate in scope?
14. Do you feel that there is a need to change the responsibilities of middle leaders?
15. What formal education and experience did you bring to your position as a middle leader?
16. What skills or qualities do you think a person needs in order to be effective as a middle leader?
17. What led you to take on the middle leadership position?
18. Is there anything specifically for the school or for your own professional growth, you would like the opportunity to achieve through your position as a middle leader?
19. What are your career expectations and professional aspirations?
20. Describe your experience of the transition from classroom teacher to middle leader.
21. If you could offer advice to educators who are new to the middle leadership position, what would it be?
22. Since holding this position have you been offered or undertaken professional development courses or training to assist you with your role as a middle leader? If so, what knowledge or skills did you gain?
23. Have there been any aspects to the position that you did not expect?
24. Do you think the training and professional learning opportunities for middle leaders could be improved? Why? If yes, how?
25. Is there anything that can be done to better support you in your middle leadership role?

26. Have you noticed any aspects of your position as middle leader that have changed since you have held the position? If so, what factors do you think have contributed to the changes?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SENIOR LEADERS

1. Could you please start by describing what middle leadership positions exist with your school's organisation?
2. Where do you see the role of middle leader fitting within the school's organisational structure?
3. What broad areas of responsibility do middle leaders hold within the school?
4. What specific duties are involved in each of these areas of responsibility?
5. What are the accountability requirements and processes associated with these positions?
6. To what extent do you see the role of middle leaders as contributing to the whole-school organisational development? Please explain the nature of their contribution.
7. How significant do you believe middle leadership positions are for the school?
8. What do you consider to be the most important function of middle leadership positions? Why is this?
9. To what extent do you feel the duties and expectations of middle leaders are clear or defined?
10. What do you perceive to be the major challenges or difficulties facing those in a middle leadership position?
11. What factors do you see influencing the work of middle leaders?
12. To what extent do you feel the duties and expectations of middle leaders are achievable and/or appropriate in scope?

13. What skills or qualities do you think a person needs in order to be effective as a middle leader?
14. Do you feel that there is a need to change the responsibilities of middle leaders?
15. What formal education and experience do you look for when staffing a middle leadership position?
16. What advice would you give to a newly appointed to a middle leadership position?
17. Do you offer professional development courses or training to newly appointed and experienced middle leaders? If yes, in what form?
18. Do you think the training and professional learning opportunities for middle leaders could be improved? Why? If yes, how?
19. Why do you think educators may wish to take on a middle leadership position?
20. Have you noticed any changes to the nature of middle leadership positions in your school? If so, what factors do you think have contributed to the changes?

APPENDIX C

QUANTITATIVE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Survey of middle leadership role perceptions

Gender: M / F

Name of middle leadership position held: _____

Current area of responsibility:

- Subject program (e.g. Head of Department, Subject Leader)
- Pastoral program (e.g. Student Services Coordinator, Head of House)
- Specialist program (e.g. Learning Support Coordinator, Director of Music)

Number of years of employment in education:

Number of years in current middle leadership position:

Total number of years experience in middle leadership:

Instructions

If you **strongly agree** with the statement, please circle 4

If you **agree** with the statement, please circle 3

If you **disagree** with the statement, please circle 2

If you **strongly disagree** with the statement, please circle 1

Part A: Role Clarity

As a middle leader:		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A1	In the school there is an understanding of the main duties and expectations of my position.	4	3	2	1
A2	The duties and expectations of my position are documented in a written position description.	4	3	2	1
A3	My position duties and expectations are clearly defined.	4	3	2	1
A4	My role is clearly delineated from other leadership positions.	4	3	2	1
A5	The responsibilities of my position are appropriate in scope.	4	3	2	1
A6	There is a shared and consistent understanding of my role within the school.	4	3	2	1
A7	There is a deep and detailed understanding of the role throughout the school community.	4	3	2	1

Part B: Role Authority

As a middle leader:		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
B1	There are opportunities for me to contribute to whole school planning and decision-making.	4	3	2	1
B2	There are opportunities for me to voice concerns about school issues.	4	3	2	1
B3	I have the authority to make decisions which affect my colleagues.	4	3	2	1
B4	I am regularly involved in planning or decision making at the whole-school level.	4	3	2	1
B5	I am consulted by the schools' senior leaders about all important whole-school decisions or plans.	4	3	2	1
B6	My ideas and opinions are taken into account.	4	3	2	1
B7	I play an influential role in whole-school development.	4	3	2	1

Part C: Role Support

As a middle leader:		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
C1	I have been provided with additional non-teaching time to fulfil my role.	4	3	2	1
C2	I have been provided with the resources required for me to fulfil my professional responsibilities	4	3	2	1
C3	I have been provided with adequate training.	4	3	2	1
C4	I have been provided with ongoing professional learning opportunities.	4	3	2	1
C5	The professional learning I have undertaken has been relevant and specific to my work as a middle leader.	4	3	2	1
C6	I am well supported in my role.	4	3	2	1
C7	I receive an appropriate program budget.	4	3	2	1
C8	I receive an appropriate allotment of non-teaching time.	4	3	2	1
C9	I am provided with optimal, high quality professional support.	4	3	2	1

Part D: Role Value

As a middle leader:		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
D1	I believe that my role is worthwhile.	4	3	2	1
D2	I see my role is as being beneficial to the day-to-day functioning of my school.	4	3	2	1
D3	My work is valued by the members of the school community.	4	3	2	1
D4	My work is recognised by the school members.	4	3	2	1
D5	My colleagues view my work as being of high importance.	4	3	2	1
D6	My work is regularly acknowledged by members of the school community.	4	3	2	1
D7	My work is recognised by the school community as being vital to the school's operation and performance.	4	3	2	1

Part E: Role Fulfilment

As a middle leader:		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
E1	I find satisfaction in my work.	4	3	2	1
E2	I find my work stimulating.	4	3	2	1
E3	I find my work fulfilling and rewarding.	4	3	2	1
E4	I enjoy the professional interactions required by the position.	4	3	2	1
E5	My day-to-day experience is enjoyable and positive.	4	3	2	1
E6	I experience a strong sense of professional satisfaction.	4	3	2	1