A mixed-methods case study to investigate the professional development needs of aspiring middle leaders in an independent secondary school

Student Dissertation

How to cite:


For guidance on citations see FAQs.

© 2022 Katherine Adams

https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/

Version: Redacted Version of Record

Link(s) to article on publisher’s website:
http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21954/ou.ro.00015502

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's data policy on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

oro.open.ac.uk
A mixed-methods case study to investigate the professional development needs of aspiring middle leaders in an independent secondary school

(Total Word Count 11,947)

Katherine Adams

Tutor – Dr Don Bradley
Contents

Acknowledgements ................................................................................................................................ 4

Abstract .................................................................................................................................................. 5

Chapter 1 – Introduction ........................................................................................................................ 6

Chapter 2 – Review of the literature ..................................................................................................... 8
  Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 8
  Research Rationale ............................................................................................................................. 8
  What are the professional development needs of middle leaders, identified in the literature? .......... 12
  What professional development do middle leaders value in the literature? ...................................... 13
  Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................ 14

Chapter 3 – Research design ................................................................................................................ 16
  Introduction ...................................................................................................................................... 16
  Design Frame .................................................................................................................................... 16
  Paradigm position ............................................................................................................................... 18
  Research methods ............................................................................................................................ 19
  Interviews ......................................................................................................................................... 19
  Questionnaires .................................................................................................................................. 22
  Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................ 24

Chapter 4 - Data Analysis and Interpretation ..................................................................................... 25
  Introduction ...................................................................................................................................... 25
  Thematic Analysis ............................................................................................................................. 25
  Which aspects of leadership do aspiring leaders need to develop in preparation for middle leadership? ................................................................................................................................... 26
  Which aspects of leadership do aspiring leaders need to develop in preparation for middle leadership? ................................................................................................................................... 29
  What professional development did middle leaders value prior to, and within the first year of securing their leadership positions? ........................................................................... 33
    Good training courses ...................................................................................................................... 33
    Accessibility of training .................................................................................................................. 34
    Mentoring and shadowing ............................................................................................................. 35
    Induction programmes .................................................................................................................... 36
    On the job experience ..................................................................................................................... 37
  Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................ 37

Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Implications ......................................................................................... 38
  Development needs of aspiring leaders ............................................................................................ 38
  Valued professional development ..................................................................................................... 39
Implications for the organisation ................................................................. 39
Limitations and further research ................................................................ 40
Postscript – Narrative Critical Reflection.................................................. 41
References .................................................................................................. 43
Appendices .................................................................................................. 52
  Appendix 1 – Interview Questions ............................................................ 52
  Appendix 2 – Ethical Appraisal Form ......................................................... 53
  Appendix 3 – Interview Information Letter ............................................... 56
  Appendix 4 – Interview Consent Form ..................................................... 58
  Appendix 5 – Questionnaire ................................................................... 59
  Appendix 6 – Questionnaire Information Letter ....................................... 68
  Appendix 7 – Thematic Map of the Development Needs of Middle Leaders 69
  Appendix 8 – Thematic Map of the Professional Development Valued by Middle Leaders 71
  Appendix 9 – Reflection Grid ................................................................ 75
Acknowledgements

Completing this masters degree has been one of the most significant challenges of my life to date. I could not have spent the many hours needed to produce this dissertation without the fantastic support of my husband and parents. I am also grateful for the excellent feedback provided by the university over the course and especially Dr Don Bradley who has continually pushed and encourage me to improve.

This dissertation is dedicated to my beautiful daughter, Harper, who was born in the middle of the second year of the course. Love you always, mummy.
Abstract

(100 words)

This mixed-methods case study seeks to identify the professional development needs of aspiring middle leaders in an independent secondary school in England. Interviews were used to identify the development needs of middle leaders, along with valued professional development tools. Data from these interviews informed questionnaires distributed to aspiring leaders to discover their development needs. The knowledge gathered was combined and the similarities and differences between both groups discussed. Data analysis demonstrated the need for a two-pronged approach to support aspiring leaders. Firstly, training and shadowing before a role and secondly, an induction programme and mentor once a role is secured.

Keywords: Professional development, aspiring leaders
Chapter 1 – Introduction

(639 words)

The requirement for good leadership, in order for a school to be successful, is well documented (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009). However, middle leaders often feel ill-prepared, particularly due to the ambiguity of the role, which is frequently shaped by the needs of the headteacher and senior leadership, instead of a clearly defined job description (Lillejord and Børte, 2020).

This is evident within my organisation, a medium sized independent secondary school in England. The school prefers to promote from within, however, there are few training opportunities for staff to develop their leadership capabilities prior to securing a leadership role. Staff are often unsure about what skills they need to develop to better prepare them for future leadership roles, frequently leading to them only undertaking compulsory, or subject specific training.

Previously, the school had relatively low staff turnover, common in independent schools, which can be perceived as a block to leadership succession (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009). However, the demographic of the workforce is changing, with many of the new staff being younger, relatively inexperienced teachers. Since new staff often lack leadership experience, being early on in their teaching careers, they are often unable to provide examples of where they have used leadership skills necessary for the role they are applying for.

This relates to the literature, with Odhiambo (2014) explaining how there is an increasing trend of individuals undertaking roles in middle leadership, with relatively few years of teaching experience and very little training to develop their leadership skills due to leadership training programmes often focusing on the top leadership positions, particularly the headteacher.

Even though there is a clear need for schools to ensure that teachers’ leadership skills are developed in order to prepare them for future leadership, the leadership development of teachers, particularly less experienced teachers, is often a low priority for schools (Szeto and Yan-Ni Cheng, 2018).
This study aims to identify the aspects of leadership that aspiring leaders should develop, along with the best methods to address these professional development needs. This should, in turn, enable more aspiring leaders within the organisation to secure a leadership role in the future. To enable this knowledge to be gathered, the following research questions were developed:

- Which aspects of leadership do aspiring leaders need to develop in preparation for middle leadership?
- What professional development did middle leaders value prior to, and within, the first year of securing their role?

A full process for the development of the research questions can be found in Chapter 2.

A small-scale case study approach was used to carry out a study within my own organisation, an approach often used by researchers (Costley, Elliot and Gibbs, 2010). Rhodes and Brundrett (2009) highlights how findings are very much bounded by their context and the culture of that particular school. Due to my constructivist viewpoint, there is an awareness that the findings of this study are context dependent and therefore not generalisable. Using an interpretivists epistemological position, the study has allowed for various viewpoints to be explored, with an appreciation that knowledge varies dependent on personal experiences. Therefore, the thoughts of both middle and aspiring leaders were used to compare their needs and to determine from the recommendations of the middle leaders, the best types of professional development.

A mixed methods approach allowed for the thoughts of middle leaders, both academic and pastoral to be gathered through interviews with 7 middle leaders. The findings from these were then used to inform questionnaires which were distributed to all staff to be completed by those who are aspiring for middle leadership roles in the future. 15 questionnaire responses were provided, these along with the interview responses were used in an attempt to answer the research questions. The research methods are discussed in further detail in Chapter 3 and analysis and findings can be found in Chapters 4 and 5.
Chapter 2 – Review of the literature

(2535 words)

Introduction
This chapter provides a summary of the concepts and ideas relevant to this study, from the articles read. Beginning with the approach used to find literature, then the research rationale and finally the knowledge that was gathered relating to the study’s research questions.

The literature review was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the issues that middle leaders face, in terms of their professional development. Many of the articles read indicated that middle leaders are ill-prepared for leadership and lack the professional development necessary to fulfil the requirements of their roles.

Both the Open University library search engine and Google Scholar were used to find relevant literature. The first search used the phrase ‘attributes for school middle leadership’ however, this returned very few results relating to my study. The phrasing was altered to include ‘attributes school leaders’ within the title. This returned 7 results using the library search, of which only 4 were relevant. The phrase was then changed to ‘professional development of middle leaders’, which identified lots of relevant literature. Results were refined depending on their age, relevance to context and whether they were peer reviewed. 7 articles were selected that were most relevant to the study. These were then read in depth. Where authors were cited in the texts and appeared relevant, the reference was assessed. If the title appeared to relate to the study, that article was also reviewed.

When assessing the relevance of the literature, particular attention was paid to the context, with the majority of the literature being produced in the United Kingdom, with studies conducted in England. Systematic reviews such as Lillejord and Børte (2020) were also included to gain wider insight. Irvine and Brundrett (2016) found that their findings, from an independent secondary school in England, were in line with findings from multiple other contexts. Therefore, some literature was considered from other contexts, but only if the findings appeared to be significant and cross-cultural.

Research Rationale
Throughout the literature reviewed, there was an indication that middle leaders were not adequately prepared to meet the demands of their role. Historically it has been assumed that
good teachers make good leaders (Lillejord and Børte, 2020). With there being a strong emphasis on succession planning in schools to retain staff, by developing them into future leaders (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006). However, there is now recognition that being a good teacher is not enough, and proper preparation and training is needed (Odhiambo, 2014). This is due to teaching requiring different skills when compared to leadership, since the skills required to manage children are different to those required to manage adults (OECD, 2008; Irvine and Brundrett, 2016).

It is well known that middle leaders play an integral part in the success of a school (Thorpe and Bennett-Powell, 2014). This has been highlighted by several researchers, with Odhiambo (2014) explaining how they are essential for school development and improving student outcomes. Both Hattie (2009) and Bush (2008) identified leadership as important in improving student attainment. However, the significance of this on attainment can often be missed, since its impact is difficult to quantify (Dinham, 2008).

Since the 1990’s, the merits of teacher leadership have been published (Frost and Durrant, 2003). Chetty (2007) found that as middle leaders are the gateway between teachers and the senior leadership team (SLT), they are in the best position to impact student progress. However, Adey (2000) explains that they lack the support and professional development needed to maximise the impact of their role. Additionally, middle leaders often find that the demands of SLT and colleagues are conflicting, leading to a difficult balancing act (Bush, 2003).

Defining middle leadership can be challenging (Kemp and Nathan, 1989). Irvine and Brundrett (2016) recognise that the role is changeable and impulsive, however this lack of structure is something that emergent middle leaders find challenging. Gurr and Drysdale (2013) explain that they are individuals with defined roles and responsibilities at the level between teachers and SLT, although, Lillejord and Børte (2020) found that the job description of middle leaders is often not clearly defined. This is due to the undefined boundaries between leadership roles (Davies, 2009). In a study conducted by Irvine and Brundrett (2016), none of the middle leaders who has been recently appointed could outline their role boundaries. While a general description of middle leaders can be given, a more comprehensive definition is dependent on the schools’ own context. In terms of this study, middle leadership is defined as Head of Department and Head of Year.
Historically, the role of a middle leader was to shelter the headteacher from unnecessary work, over time this does not appear to have changed, with Lillejord and Børte (2020) finding that tasks given by headteachers are often random and ever increasing, depending on what the headteacher requires at that time, leading middle leaders to have an undoable and uncertain workload. Gunter (2001) explained that middle leaders often struggle to complete their work. Davies (2009) echoes these findings, explaining that due to middle leaders also being teachers, they often do not get the opportunity to reflect on their leadership activities. This is since their role as leaders often takes place in ‘free’ moments such as break and lunch time, instead of in dedicated periods of time (Brundrett and Terrell, 2004).

Caldwell (2006) identified a need for leadership to be more distributed, with aspects of SLT roles being given to middle leaders, with middle leaders often being identified as the most significant group to allow for distributed leadership (Brundrett and Terrell, 2004). This shift needs to be evident in school policy, which Davis (2006) explains is occurring in many schools already, who adopt a distributed leadership approach. Even though there are numerous advocates of distributed leadership, Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008) explain that there is little evidence that this form of leadership directly impacts student attainment. Additionally, Gurr and Drysdale (2013) found that even though there is a strong emphasis on the distribution of leadership, this often ignores the contributions and roles of current middle leaders.

In terms of power and agency, Lárusdóttir and O’Connor (2017) identify that middle leaders feel that these are lacking. Since middle leadership is often viewed as an extension of SLT performing under their guidance, rather than as their own defined roles (Odhiambo, 2014). Lárusdóttir and O’Connor (2017) also found that middle leaders are given very little support. This demonstrates that although it may appear that leadership is distributed, the power very much remains at the top of the organisation.

Due to the ever-changing nature of the middle leadership role, Harris, Muijs and Crawford (2003) identified that lack of leadership training meant that middle leaders were not prepared to undertake the tasks they were being provided with. This leads to middle leaders questioning their abilities and lacking desire for progression with NCSL (2006) finding that 70% of the middle leaders at that time not aspiring to headship.
Rhodes and Brundrett (2009) explain how it is beneficial to develop your own leaders, who can then fill vacant leadership roles, with them explaining the importance of leadership succession in an earlier study (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2005). Headteachers having a positive approach to leadership development can support middle leaders and help them to address worries they have about the role such as workload (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2008). Thorpe and Bennett-Powell (2014) found that the development of middle leaders is often overlooked. However, Szeto and Cheng (2018) identified that more attention is being given to teacher leadership development in the literature in recent years.

Although some leadership programmes exist, it is rare that they adequately support middle leaders in addressing their professional development needs (Lillejord and Børte, 2020). Odhiambo (2014) found that there is often little support for the development of middle leaders, with mentoring and workshops being the main forces of development, rather than official programmes. Since for many middle leaders it is their first leadership role, they need to develop skills that are different to those in the classroom. For these emergent leaders, training should vary from established leaders to enable them to develop basic leadership skills (Irvine and Brundrett, 2016).

Throughout the literature, experience is identified as central to middle leaders’ knowledge development, with lack of experience highlighted as a significant issue (Lillejord and Børte, 2020). In the study conducted by Irvine and Brundrett (2016), middle leaders often found that experience supported them to make decisions, since they could then use previous situations to inform their choices.

Interestingly, Thorpe and Bennett-Powell (2014) found that both experienced and novice middle leaders had the same professional development needs, even though they also identified these needs as areas of competence in a survey.

There is a significant amount of literature surrounding the professional development of senior leaders, but much less about middle leaders (Thorpe and Bennett-Powell, 2014). Several researchers highlight this with Rhodes and Brundrett (2009) also identifying the lack of research investigating the professional development of middle leaders. Much of the literature that does exist is concerned with the professional development that middle leaders
undertake to prepare for a senior leadership role, instead of the role that they currently hold (Thorpe and Bennett-Powell, 2014).

Even though the role of middle leaders is becoming more varied and challenging, Rhodes and Brundrett (2009) explain that further research needs to look at the characteristics that are required for successful leadership.

Reviewing these articles, it became apparent that there is a need for more research which focusses on the professional development of aspiring middle leaders, since there is very little on this topic. To discover the development needs of aspiring middle leaders, both current and aspiring leaders’ opinions should be gathered. This led to the following research questions:

- Which aspects of leadership do aspiring leaders need to develop in preparation for middle leadership?
- What professional development did middle leaders value prior to, and within, the first year of securing their leadership role?

To begin to gather knowledge on these the literature was reviewed to identify the professional development needs of middle leaders and the types of professional development they valued. These ideas from the literature were then used to inform interview questions.

**What are the professional development needs of middle leaders, identified in the literature?**

Middle leaders expressed a need to learn how to lead, with Thorpe and Bennett-Powell (2014) finding that middle leaders weren’t as confident in team management, in terms of monitoring them and holding them accountable, often possessing weak team leadership skills. Several researchers such as Ng and Chan (2014) and Barnett, Shoho and Oleszewski (2012) identified that middle leaders struggle to be instructional leaders.

Significantly, Elmore (2000) found that middle leaders often do not have any greater ability than teachers to lead change, or improve student attainment, indicating that the current CPD for middle leaders is ineffective. Due to this, Thorpe and Bennett-Powell (2014) explain how the induction process for middle leaders needs to be formalised. As well as this, there should
be opportunity to be mentored to enable middle leaders to address their ongoing development needs.

A key part of many academic middle leaders’ role is to observe teachers and evaluate their practice. However, Barnett, Shoho and Oleszewski (2012) found that they often felt they lacked the necessary skills. Middle leaders also indicated that they found evaluating teachers’ work difficult in research conducted by Ng and Chan (2014).

Middle leaders also struggled in the more administrative tasks such as data analysis, with this being highlighted as a development need by Thorpe and Bennett-Powell (2014), Barnett, Shoho and Oleszewski (2012) and Ng and Chan (2014).

Thorpe and Bennett-Powell (2014) also identified several other development needs these were, time management and prioritising tasks, their ability to deliver CPD sessions and effective integration with the community.

Rhodes and Brundrett (2009) explain that the headteacher needs to be proactive in identifying and developing leaders from their own workforce, providing them with an understanding of what they can do to achieve career progression. However, Thorpe and Bennett-Powell (2014) explain that it is not possible to simply derive a single solution to meet the development needs of middle leaders.

**What professional development do middle leaders value in the literature?**

The methods used to develop school leaders are contradictory in the research. Murphy (2002) identified issues with formal training programmes. Whereas Paterson and Coleman (2003) found that both formal and informal training programmes have their own merits since, as Cowie and Crawford (2008) explain, due to the context dependent and everchanging world of leadership, using solely formal training programmes will not allow for adequate preparation for middle leadership. Middle leaders and teachers in research conducted by Rhodes and Brundrett (2008) agree with this, finding that leadership courses alone were often inadequate.

In research conducted by Rhodes and Brundrett (2008), headteachers discussed the importance of middle leaders initiating their own training, identifying their needs themselves. Patton, Parker and Tannehill (2015) highlighted the importance of teachers selecting their
preferred professional development, since mandatory courses often have no impact or does not lead to changed practice. Paranosic and Riveros (2017) found that middle leaders value ‘on the job’ experience as a method to develop their leadership skills. Similarly, Irvine and Brundrett (2016) found the need for teachers to have practical experience of the role, and to gather insights from others who are in the role, to transition from teacher to leader. With Lillejord and Børte (2020) finding that middle leaders value the opinions of those with experience, who they trust and know will not be judgemental.

Coaching and mentoring were both mentioned as being significant in research conducted by Thorpe and Bennett-Powell (2014). There are differences between the two, with coaching being more of a counselling service to support individuals when undertaking new roles (CUREE, 2005). Whereas mentoring focuses on a specific developmental need, which will improve performance (Tomlinson, 2004). Even though Rhodes and Brundrett (2008) found that most teachers valued mentors to help develop leadership skills, they commented that this could not be effective if trust was not established.

MacBeath (2011) found that headteachers valued coaching and found it an effective development tool. In research conducted by Rhodes and Brundrett (2009), coaching and mentoring, as well as shadowing others, regular rotation of roles and career advice were all valued highly. The want for a mentor was also apparent in a systematic review conducted by Lillejord and Børte (2020). Significantly, when Rhodes and Brundrett (2008) gathered the opinions of middle leaders across contexts, shadowing others and networking were viewed as effective professional development tools. Middle leaders feel more comfortable discussing ideas with mentors, particularly in informal settings (Lillejord and Børte, 2020). However, Hobson and Sharp (2005) found little tangible evidence on the effectiveness of these types of programmes. Professional learning communities are often seen as valuable, however, in reality, they can often lack professionalism and rarely produce new perspectives or ideas (Lillejord and Børte, 2020).

**Conclusion**
Reviewing the literature has enabled me to further understand the significance of effective middle leadership, along with gaining an insight into the types of professional development middle leaders have undertaken and value. These ideas have provided a basis for the
formation of the interview which formed the first stage of the research, as explained in Chapter three.
Chapter 3 – Research design

(3275 words)

Introduction
This chapter begins by looking at the contested definitions the chosen approach for this study, a case study. My paradigmatic position is then discussed, with explanations of how this relates to my research in terms of the research methods used and then interpretation of findings. The research methods are then discussed in detail, firstly the use of interviews, the findings of which informed the questionnaires given to aspiring leaders.

Design Frame
A case study approach was used due to its ability to gather the opinions of individuals within a single organisation to gain a deeper understanding of a problem. This approach was selected since it seemed like the best fit for the study and was used in similar research studies such as the work of Szeto and Cheng (2018) chose to use a case study approach when conducting research in teacher leadership development.

A case study is a broad research approach which can use a variety of research methods to allow relevant data to be collected, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the research problem (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2017).

The definition of a case study is often contested in the literature (Yazan, 2015). From reading the multiple definitions in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2017), it tends to follow that a case study is a study of a single case, which will be influenced by its contextual factors. However, the severity of the impact depends on the definition, with Creswell (1994) perceiving a strong link between the two, whereas Verschuren (2003) claims that it varies on a case-by-case basis. Due to the ontological perspective of the researcher, this study identifies that there is a close link between context and study outcomes.

Along with the variation in case study definitions, there is also debate about what constitutes a case (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2017). Both Robson (2002) and Punch (2005) explain how cases could be anything ranging from one person to an entire organisation. The key is to ensure that the ‘case’ being examined does not become so large that the study cannot
produce insights at a suitable depth (Pring, 2015). For this study, the ‘case’ constituted of current and aspiring middle leaders in an independent secondary school.

The benefit of a case study is that it allows for a true understanding of a real-life situation, allowing for a synthesis of theory and real life (Yin, 2009).

A case study approach permits a mixed methods approach to be used, meaning that both qualitative and quantitative data can be collected (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2017). This was used in this study, with both interviews and questionnaires used to collect relevant data.

Case studies seek to gain a true understanding of a situation, with this study seeking to discover the professional development needs of aspiring leaders by gathering ideas from both current middle leaders as well as aspiring leaders (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2017). There is an awareness that this study is contextually bound, since the development needs within this particular organisation may vary when compared to other schools, due to a variety of contextual factors such as, location, demographic, state or independent, teacher experience levels and so on.

The way in which a case study is conducted depends on its purpose. Denscombe (2014) explains that there are two main types of purpose, ‘discovery-led’ and ‘theory-led’. This research is ‘discovery-led’ since the research stems from a desire to understand a problem that impacts the organisation.

Even though the case study approach will allow for a deeper understanding of the development needs of aspiring leaders, these results will not be generalisable, which is a common criticism of the case study approach (Nisbett and Watt, 1984). However, as can be seen in Chapter 4, many of the findings corroborate with other research conducted in a variety of settings.

Another key criticism is the risk of bias (Nisbett and Watt, 1984). This can be further aggravated by the research being conducted by one researcher, as it was in this case. To attempt to mitigate the risk of bias, leaders who participated in the study were randomly selected and were given their transcripts to check. The questionnaire, which was anonymous, was given to all teaching staff, with the option for them to complete it if they were aspiring
leaders. The risk of bias increases if it needs to rely on the memories of the researcher (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2017). To prevent this, all interviews were recorded.

**Paradigm position**

My viewpoint is that the personal and professional experiences of individuals inform both the way that they lead, and their professional development needs. Due to this, I appreciate that the findings collected from this study will be bound by the participant’s experiences and the context of the organisation.

Since this research aims to understand the professional development needs of aspiring middle leaders within my organisation, it was appropriate to use a case study approach with myself as an insider researcher. Being an insider researcher has both benefits and challenges. Since the participants know me and we have already built a rapport, I found that individuals were quite willing to participate in the study, with nobody declining the invitation to be interviewed. However, the interview required participants to be quite critical of their leadership practice and potentially of the organisation. This concern that the report could therefore be quite critical could lead to tensions forming between myself and members of the organisation (Costley, Elliot and Gibbs, 2010). Fortunately, this did not occur, however, there were some comments that participants were only willing to make once the recording and dictation software were turned off, and not to be included in the report. This demonstrates that participants withheld some information because they did not want SLT to have access to some comments.

The understanding that my findings are bound by their context and shaped by participants experiences corroborates with a constructivist’s ontological perspective (Kawulich, 2012). Data was collected using an interpretivist epistemological position, which appreciated how data will vary depending on the participants’ viewpoints (Grix, 2002). Due to this, data was collected from a wide range of job roles within the school, to allow a variety of viewpoints to be collected, allowing for greater depth in my findings.

A case study recognises that there are multiple realities bounded by their context, hence the need for multiple participants to gain various different understandings, since although all participants are in the same organisation, they all have their own contextual factors that will
influence their perceptions of their needs (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2017). Such as, their professional experiences, as well as their own beliefs.

A case study approach follows an interpretivist viewpoint, appreciating the needs for a situation to be considered from the perspective of the participant (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2017). This approach often comes under fire by researchers who question its legitimacy when compared with other approaches such as analysis of historical trends (Smith, 1991). However, historical trends on professional development needs may vary when compared to the current needs of an organisation, particularly in the wake of Covid.

**Research methods**

This research uses a ‘romantic’ conception of interviews (Alvesson, 2003). This is where the interviews are based on established relationships between the researcher and participant, enabling more authentic conversations to take place (Roulston, 2010). This approach uses several research methods to allow the knowledge to be verified. This was done by comparing the responses of seven middle leaders to identify themes. These themes were then used to produce questionnaires which were given to aspiring leaders to determine whether the same professional development needs were identified.

**Interviews**

Interviews were used to gather the ideas of current middle leaders. In depth interviews allow for questioning to be adapted and seek to learn about the experiences of a few individuals (Marvasti and Freie, 2017). The aim of the interviews was to discover the types of professional development that middle leaders had taken prior to, and within, the first year of their middle leadership role and in particular, the aspects that they valued. This particular research method was selected since it allows for in-depth data collection, as the researcher can ask follow-up questions to gain further insight and also recognise non-verbal clues, which may indicate the need for further expansion (Burton and Bartlett, 2005).

It should be recognised that the interview responses will be informed by the participants own lives and experiences. Therefore, a structured interview would not be suitable as Gubrium and Holstein (2002) explain, as viewpoints are not fixed. The interview should be considered as a social interaction between the researcher and the participant (Dingwall, 1997).
Therefore, a semi-structure approach was used and although pre-prepared questions were used, the questioning and interview was adapted depending on the participants’ responses.

When reading literature about the types of professional development that middle leaders value, mentors were mentioned frequently (Thorpe and Bennett-Powell, 2014, Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009, Lillejord and Børte, 2020). Since they were a significant theme in the literature, there were questions that asked whether a mentor was provided, and if not, if that would have been beneficial.

The order of questions was carefully considered, something that Burton and Bartlett (2005) explain is important. The interview (Appendix 1) began by getting participants to reflect on the training they have undertaken, moving onto training they felt was necessary to support their development and finally asked for training recommendations for aspiring leaders. This order allowed for the leader to reflect on the training they had undertaken and require, before asking what they recommended. If the questioning was inverted, there is a risk that the answers would not be as fully developed since leaders would not have been provided the opportunity to reflect on their own professional development.

7 interview participants were selected at random from the middle leadership in the organisation, which consists of 55 individuals. This was done by numbering the leaders from 1-55 and then generating random numbers in this range to select participants. Middle leaders were defined as Head/Assistant Head of Year and Head/Assistant Head of Faculty/Department. The intention was to gather a variety of ideas and experiences across both academic and pastoral leadership roles.

There is a recognition that due to the presence of established relationships between the researcher and participants, participants may have felt obligated to participate (Anderson and Herr, 2009). Power relationships were also considered as they can become a potential source of bias (Anderson and Herr, 2009). Using participants who were higher in the organisation hierarchy than the researcher reduced the risk of power issues (Costley, Elliot and Gibbs, 2010). Of course, there can be power issues the other way, which did occur to some degree, in terms of participants controlling the amount of time for the interviews dependent on their schedules.
It is important that both listening skills and good body language are displayed by the researcher (Burton and Bartlett, 2005). To achieve this, interviews were conducted face to face. Interestingly, Glogowska, Young and Lockyer (2011) found that face to face interviews were not more reliable, since other methods such as phone interviews allow for a degree of anonymity, which may make participants feel more at ease. However, due to established relationships with the participants, face to face interviews seemed appropriate.

Dictation software, along with recording of the interview was used to aid transcript writing. This allowed the researcher to focus on the interview and what participants were saying, summarising the interview at various stages, as recommended by Burton and Bartlett (2005). Conducting interviews in person also allows for facial expressions to be read, which could indicate the need for clarification or further questioning (Marvasti and Freie, 2017). This approach then gave the researcher the capacity to consider the responses and extend or adapt questioning as necessary.

The location and timing of the interviews was also considered, since this can impact the way in which participants respond (Burton and Bartlett, 2005). Participants were provided with a selection of dates and times to complete the interview as well as the offer of interview questions in advance. Once they had selected, they chose the location that they preferred. Some participants chose to conduct the interview in my classroom, while other chose their offices. This was to ensure that the participants felt comfortable and not rushed, to allow them to talk openly and honestly in a space of their choosing. Only one participant requested the questions prior to the interview to prepare their responses, this participant provided the most in-depth and comprehensive answers.

Prior to conducting the interviews, the ethics surrounding them were carefully considered. This was done by adhering to the ethical appraisal form (Appendix 2) completed prior to undertaking the study, along with the ethics grid by Stuchbury and Fox (2009) which was used as a planning tool. This was particularly important due to a number of factors such as, lack of anonymity, recording of interviews, and that findings of the study will be reported to SLT. The BERA (2019) guidelines were used to ensure that all ethical guidelines were met. When participants were invited to interview, they were provided with an information letter (Appendix 3) and consent form (Appendix 4). The information letter outlined the purpose of the research and how data was going to be used. Interviews were only conducted once
signed consent forms had been received. At the time of the interview, the purpose of the
research, data usage and the right to withdraw were discussed again. It was also explained
that any information that either made the participants identifiable, or anyone else in the
organisation, would be redacted (British Psychological Society, 2014).

Once the transcripts were produced, copies were given to participants. The entire interview
was transcribed, with information to be redacted highlighted. Participants were then given
the opportunity to review their transcript and redact anything further. Some chose to do this,
but all participants continued to allow their interview responses to be used in the research.

Walford (2007) explains that using interviews alone is insufficient to truly understand a
problem. This is due to the knowledge created being formed by the perceptions of the
participants. These perceptions can vary over time. Additionally, the participant can be
selective with what they are willing to disclose, this is something that occurred during the
interviews with several participants disclosing additional information once the interview had
concluded that they thought was significant but did not want documented due to SLT having
access to the findings. Bryman (2006) explains how a mixed methods approach of using
interviews to inform questionnaires can be used. This is the type of approach that was used
in this study since the interviews allowed for a more in-depth response, but due to the
anonymity of the questionnaire, there was a greater chance of more honest responses.

**Questionnaires**

After the interviews were conducted and the transcripts had been approved, thematic
analysis was used to discover the professional development needs of middle leaders. These
themes were then used to form the basis of the questionnaire to identify the current
capabilities of aspiring middle leaders, along with their training requests.

The questionnaire (Appendix 5) was sent to all teaching staff (166 members), with an
information letter (Appendix 6) that explained the research and that only aspiring leaders
should participate, along with how the data would be stored and the ethics surrounding the
study. 16 people completed the questionnaire; however, one participant had held a middle
leadership position for many years and so their results were not used for this study.

Questionnaires are an effective method to gather the ideas of multiple participants (Burton
and Bartlett, 2005). Careful consideration is needed when designing questionnaires, since
they often lack depth (Burton and Bartlett, 2005). Each question needs a clear purpose which relates to the research questions (Burton and Bartlett, 2005).

Both open and closed questions were used, with the closed questions being pre-coded from strongly agree to strongly disagree and a selection of multiple options for training, where more than one selection could be made. Using these types of questions allows for easier data analysis, and for general trends to be identified (Burton and Bartlett, 2005). However, there are issues with using pre-coded questions since participants have to select the response that they feel is most closely aligned with their own views, when their response may be different if they could answer in their own words (Burton and Bartlett, 2005). In an attempt to counteract this, some open questions were also used to discover the leadership training participants had undertaken, how the school could support them to prepare for a leadership role and to add any further thoughts.

There is a risk that participants may only provide brief answers to open questions as Burton and Bartlett (2005) warn. There was a variety of responses in terms of length and depth, some participants produced comprehensive answers, while others replied with single words. The average completion time was 7 minutes 33 seconds, with the shortest time being 3 minutes 8 seconds and the longest 30 minutes 4 seconds.

A benefit of using a questionnaire, particularly since it was online via Microsoft Forms, was that participants were anonymous. There were also no questions that would lead to participants becoming identifiable by asking about job role or years of experience. This degree of anonymity should enable participants to respond openly. The results of the questionnaire were then exported to Microsoft Excel for data analysis in a password protected file.

Due to the many pressures on teaching staff and that the research is not their own, there was an expectation that response rate may be low (Burton and Bartlett, 2005). However, with a response rate of almost 10% of all teaching staff, that appears to be a good reflection of the number of aspiring middle leaders, since over 30% of the staff are already middle leaders.

It is important that the statements used for the section of the questionnaire using a Likert scale are unambiguous (Wolfe and Smith, 2007). The statements should address a single idea
so that there is only one concept in which participants can agree or disagree with (Nemoto and Beglar, 2014). Statements should also be written from a positive stance, ‘I can’ or ‘I am able to’ (Wolfe and Smith, 2007).

A five-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree was used. Joshi et al (2015) discusses the debate between using a seven point and five-point scale with a seven-point scale allowing more variation in levels of agreement. However, Smith et al (2003) found that scales with more than six points rarely aid understanding, and four-point scales are more suited to younger audiences (Nemoto and Beglar, 2014).

Neutral was the central point of the Likert scale, making it symmetrical (Joshi et al, 2015). Some researchers criticise the use of a neutral category due to issues of analysis and since the questionnaire should be designed using questions in which participants can answer (Nemoto and Beglar, 2014). However, neutral is used to allow participants to display a lack of agreement in either direction and to make the intervals between each point more defined and equal (Joshi et al, 2015).

Nemoto and Beglar (2014) recommend using the Likert scale questions in conjunction with other data collection methods such as open questions and interviews since this enables a more thorough understanding to be developed.

**Conclusion**

In summary, a case study approach was used and the ideas of both current and aspiring middle leaders were collected from interviews and questionnaires respectively. The data gathered from the interviews was used to inform the questionnaires. The data analysis and interpretation can be found in the following chapter.
Chapter 4 - Data Analysis and Interpretation

(3928 words)

Introduction

This chapter seeks to process, analyse, and interpret the data collected from both interviews and questionnaires. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected, therefore a range of analytical tools were used including thematic analysis and graphical representation. To ensure credibility, the research methods used were carefully assessed to ensure that they enabled the research questions to be answered. The use of multiple research methods and including both middle leaders and aspiring leaders, allowed for a greater diversity of participants, as well as enabling triangulation of thoughts and ideas. This chapter begins with the process of analysing the interview data, which was then used to inform the questions in the questionnaire. The findings of both the interview and questionnaire are discussed in relation to the research questions and literature. Following the paradigmatic positionality of the researcher, there was an awareness that the perception of what constitutes agreement and to what level vary depending on each individual. Therefore, data was not analysed on an individual basis, but concentrates on general trends of agreement across all participants. Throughout the data analysis and interpretation, cross referencing and multiple opinions were used in order to produce more reliable conclusions. Those conclusions will be discussed in further detail, along with their implications, in chapter 5.

Thematic Analysis

To enable the qualitative data, particularly from the interviews, to be interpreted, thematic analysis was used. The aim of this type of data interpretation is to create new knowledge, rather than just simply validating ideas from the literature (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). A criticism of this approach is that it interprets the data at face value, instead of searching for deeper meaning (Sandelowski, 2010). This is, however, more often a criticism of analysis that only seeks to develop categories which remain descriptive, rather than themes which investigate deeper insights (Green et al., 2007). The process outlined by Vaismoradi et al. (2016) was used. This involved four stages:

Stage 1 – Reading the transcripts to enable an overall understanding of each interview. This was repeated several times to ensure they have been interpreted correctly. Additionally, the
audio recordings were listened to, and notes were taken. Any ideas that appeared significant were highlighted. Initial coding took place in an attempt to reduce the data, this is recommended by Gläser and Laudel (2013). To ensure that the analysis remains an accurate representation of what participants have said, it is important that the coding does not lose the meaning, which is why quotations have also been used within the analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2016).

Stage 2 – This stage enables codes to be organised and grouped together in an attempt to inform the research questions (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). Where codes are repeated for example, the same concepts are mentioned by several participants, a theme can be generated (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). This type of approach can be criticised due to its subjective nature and since the process of generating themes is not verified (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). To attempt to counteract this, themes were only developed if participants used very similar wording in response to the same questions. These themes were then related to the literature to identify differences and similarities.

Stage 3 – Finally, themes are connected together along with the literature to enable the researcher to answer the research questions (Vaismoradi et al., 2016).

**Which aspects of leadership do aspiring leaders need to develop in preparation for middle leadership?**

Thematic analysis was initially used to generate the themes around the development needs of middle leaders from the interview data. These can be visualised using the thematic map (Appendix 7). The themes identified were:

- Role Responsibilities
- Leadership Skills
- Legislation and Professional Bodies
- People Skills
- Language
- Mental Health
- Leadership Structures

These were then used, alongside their sub themes, to generate the questionnaire which was then given to aspiring leaders. The findings from both the interviews and questionnaire in
relation to the professional development needs of aspiring leaders have been synthesised in order to allow for more comprehensive analysis to take place.

Due to the paradigmatic position of the study, data cannot be extrapolated to enable assumptions to be made. Therefore, the non-parametric data from the questionnaires was analysed using descriptive statistics (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). Data is represented mostly in tables and graphs are only used when they add meaning to findings since Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) identify that graphical methods can often lack meaning when compared to tables.

The closed questions used an ordinal scale. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) consider how combining categories could lead to the data being distorted. Instead, scores were assigned to each category and then a total score was calculated for each skill. ‘Strongly agree’ was given 5 points and ‘Strongly disagree’ was given 1 point. Since there were 15 participants in the questionnaire, the maximum score was 75 and the minimum score was 15. These scores were then allocated confidence levels as can be seen in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Confidence Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75 - 61</td>
<td>Aspiring leaders are very confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 - 46</td>
<td>Most aspiring leaders are confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 - 31</td>
<td>Aspiring leaders are unsure about their capabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 – 15</td>
<td>Aspiring leaders do not feel confident</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 – A table to show the confidence scores from questionnaire responses

Additionally, participants were asked to tick any skills that they felt they needed training in. The percentage of staff that selected each skill was then assessed using the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of staff requesting training (%)</th>
<th>Training need</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 - 80</td>
<td>Immediate training need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79 - 60</td>
<td>Most aspiring leaders require training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59 - 40</td>
<td>Some aspiring leaders require training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 - 20</td>
<td>Few aspiring leaders require training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 – 0</td>
<td>No immediate training need</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 – A table to show how the severity of training needs was allocated to percentages of staff requesting training
This was then compared with the number of middle leaders who discussed a training need. It should be noted that the sample size of middle leaders (n=7) is smaller when compared with aspiring leaders (n=15). This means that the data for middle leaders is more likely to distort findings, as each individual will have a bigger impact on the percentages.

The participants of the interviews were named 1-7 and had both academic and pastoral roles as can be seen in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Number</th>
<th>Academic/Pastoral Middle Leader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pastoral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pastoral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Pastoral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Pastoral</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3 – A table to show participant numbering and role type*

Questionnaire respondents were numbered 1-15 in the order in which their responses were submitted.
Which aspects of leadership do aspiring leaders need to develop in preparation for middle leadership?

The graph below shows the most common training requests of both middle leaders and aspiring leaders.

![Most common training requests](image)

*Figure 1 - A graph to show the most common training requests of middle and aspiring leaders*

The areas for professional development of middle leaders, compared to aspiring leaders vary quite significantly. There were only two needs that were common between both, firstly understanding mental health issues with 47% and of aspiring leaders and 43% of middle leaders indicating a training need. Secondly, both groups requested training on how to deal with difficult people. With 57% of middle leaders and 40% of aspiring leaders requesting training. Participants in research conducted by Thorpe and Bennett-Powell (2014) also found it challenging to monitor and hold teams accountable.

There were many areas where more aspiring leaders identified a training need, compared to middle leaders, which is perhaps to be expected. One of these areas was data analysis, which interestingly was indicated as an immediate training need for middle leaders in a study.
conducted by Thorpe and Bennett – Powell (2014) but was identified more as a need for aspiring leaders in this study. Some areas also conflicted with previous research, with Thorpe and Bennett- Powell (2014) finding other immediate needs being subject and curriculum knowledge and time management. However, this was not indicated by participants in either the questionnaires or interviews with participant 4 commenting on their good time management skills. There were also some areas such as, reading body language, handling difficult conversations and how to delegate, which were mentioned more by middle leaders than aspiring leaders. This could suggest that those needs are identified once in position. Therefore, it could be beneficial for aspiring leaders to undertake training in these areas prior to a leadership role, to allow them to be better prepared.

When looking at the overall categories and the number of moderate training needs (over 40% of participants require training), compared to the total number of training needs, some of the results were the same and can be seen in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage of participants with a moderate or above training need</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle Leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Responsibilities</td>
<td>0/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Skills</td>
<td>1/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislation and Professional Bodies</td>
<td>0/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People Skills</td>
<td>2/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>1/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health and Wellbeing</td>
<td>1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Structures</td>
<td>0/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 - A table to show the number of moderate training needs of middle and aspiring leaders

These were, people skills (2/9), language (1/3) and mental health and wellbeing (1/2). Meaning that the needs identified were similar for both aspiring and middle leaders. This could be since many of the people and language skills listed are applications of skills developed through teaching such as, building relationships, inspiring others and use of language. However, middle leaders identified no significant training needs within the
categories of role responsibilities, legislation and professional bodies. Whereas aspiring leaders required training in 50% of the role responsibilities skills and 75% of the legislation and professional bodies skills. This indicates a significant difference between the two groups and demonstrates the difference between the training needs of middle and aspiring leaders within the organisation.

In the questionnaire given to aspiring leaders, they were asked, ‘In which ways do you feel the school could support you in securing a leadership role in the future?’. Some respondents gave short responses, mainly requesting more CPD and external training. The longer responses showed a general sense of frustration within the aspiring leaders.

‘Before applying for a role, there are not very many opportunities to observe or attempt the sort of thing that would later be expected of you in that role. The reality is that you will have to just find out on the job what these things are like’
- Respondent 5

‘Providing opportunities to gain experience and training’
- Respondent 7

‘Providing training that is not constantly booked up’
- Respondent 9

Rhodes and Brundrett (2009) emphasise the importance of the school understanding their current training needs, as well as ones in the future and then using this understanding to provide the opportunities needed to develop these areas. From the questionnaire comments this does not appear to be the case since aspiring leaders are seeking development opportunities with little success. It is important that the school is proactive in developing leaders since Dimmock (2003) found that for leadership to be successful, leaders need to support others to develop their skills.

The frustration with the lack of training opportunities was echoed by middle leaders in their interview responses. Something that Irvine and Brundrett (2016) often found to be the case. Several participants (2,3 and 4) felt that it would have been beneficial to have received training at the start. However, Participant 1 felt that due to the reactive nature of the
pastoral role, it would be challenging to provide adequate training to meet the needs of an ever-changing role. Participant 3 felt that assumptions had been made about what they already knew:

‘When I was employed was it assumed I would just know how to do it, I don’t know how to do this stuff’.

This sense of frustration was shared by other participants such as, participant 4 who discussed how the management course they are currently on should have taken place at the start of their role. Notably, participant 4 identified that this course had changed the way they would approach situations such as change management, which was unsuccessful when they tried to implement change prior to the course.

Several pastoral leaders (participants 2 and 6), identified a need for their mental health training to occur earlier in their roles, with participant 2 explaining:

‘even just feeling like you have been on a course or had a certificate or had something that made you feel like you had an authority rather than your own instinct would have been useful’.

Participant 3 found that even though they had leadership training prior to undertaking their role, they felt they needed training specific to the school.

Participant 7 articulated how they had had to transition from reactive to proactive in terms of contacting home. This was something that they struggled with initially.

Participant 5 found dealing with underperforming staff challenging and identified this as a training need. This was also the concern of some of the interviewees in research conducted by Thorpe and Bennett-Powell (2014) and a significant challenge faced by participants in a study by Irvine and Brundrett (2016).

It should also be noted that the participants, particularly in the interviews, may not have articulated all of their training needs (Thorpe and Bennett-Powell, 2014). Due to this, participants were informed that they could email with any further insights after the interview, however none of the participants chose to do this.
What professional development did middle leaders value prior to, and within the first year of securing their leadership positions?

Thematic analysis was conducted again to identify the themes that were discussed across middle leaders in interviews about the professional development that they valued. These were, good training courses, accessibility of training, mentoring and shadowing, induction programmes and on the job experience. These can be visualised using the thematic map (Appendix 8). These themes echoed those identified by Bush and Glover (2004).

**Good training courses**

Several participants (3, 4 and 7) mentioned how good the leadership course for inspiring leaders was, which is run by the organisation. However, they also explained that it is oversubscribed, meaning that places are often filled by current middle leaders, instead of aspiring leaders. Participant 4 explained that this course has changed the way they would approach change management and difficult conversations. However, all participants that attended the course explained that not all sessions were relevant to them and so it would have been better for them to be on an opt in basis.

In terms of in school CPD, participant 1 valued training where it was possible to attend sessions that were most relevant. This is a valued approach by participants, with participant 6 explaining that whole school CPD tends to be too generic.

Participant 6 valued the mental health first aid course to give an overview of mental health issues, but they explained that they needed much more training.

Participant 7 explained the value behind attending a training course on delegation:

> ‘after talking to some of the other middle leaders in the school, that’s one thing that’s key is you can’t run the whole show yourself. You have to be able to release some bits.’

Both participant 6 and 7 explained the value of case studies and role plays to help understand how to approach situations.

Participant 7 compared day courses and sessions that were delivered in two-hour blocks over several evenings online. They explained that the latter was a better method as it allowed for more opportunity for reflection.
Accessibility of training

Participants 1, 2 and 5 found that training was often approved if it was on their annual performance review. However, if training needs were identified at other points of the year, these requests were often rejected. Respondents in research conducted by Rhodes and Brundrett (2009) also found that performance reviews related to their leadership development, however it is unclear as to the capacity in which this occurred.

Participant 1 explained that they struggle to find relevant courses. Participant 5 had a similar opinion and would prefer someone to find relevant courses and sign them up. Participant 7 also highlighted the issue that it is often difficult to assess whether a course is going to be meaningful and therefore worth the cost and cover. These limitations to professional development were also found by Rhodes and Brundrett (2009), particularly in relation to high workload making it challenging to commit to training programmes and the uncertainty of whether a training course will be appropriate.

Several participants (3 and 7) felt as though training should be self-initiated, something that Weindling (2003) and participants in a study by Rhodes and Brundrett (2008) also identify as important. Participant 3 stated:

‘Once you reach a certain point it’s up to you as a sort of grown up to seek it out yourself, rather than expecting the training to be handed to you because there’s nothing worse also than attending a training session where you’re like why am I attending this?’.

Participant 7 also discussed the challenge of accessing professional development as an aspiring leader:

‘If you’re aspiring to be a middle leader you have limited time because you’re putting all your work into making sure everything is excellent and outstanding’.

Participant 4 discussed how training should be put in place to allow aspiring leaders to develop prior to undertaking the role. Going further than this, they also discuss how more succession planning should be taking place:

‘Let’s start developing that person now rather than waiting until they get into role and then they’re not ready to do it’.
Rhodes, Brundrett and Nevill (2006) express how headteachers are integral in identifying leadership talent within the school, and that this is a necessary process to allow for successful leadership succession to occur. From the comments provided by participant 4, it is clear that this is not currently occurring within the organisation. This lack of familiarity with succession planning was apparent across contexts and sectors in research conducted by Rhodes and Brundrett (2009), indicating that this is a much more widespread issue.

**Mentoring and shadowing**

Several participants (1, 2, 5 and 7) recommended shadowing and/or shadowed others themselves. However, participant 1 warned:

‘*I think as an aspiring leader you have to be quite careful to do the shadowing because it’s not it wouldn’t be a real experience*’.

That being said, participant 7 claimed that it ‘is absolutely the most valuable CPD you can have’ however, they also explain how ‘equally it’s quite difficult to get that sometimes because some of the topics are very sensitive’. This again explains the issues of access that aspiring leaders face.

Participant 5 highlighted another benefit of shadowing which is that it gives prospective leaders an insight into the role, allowing them to establish whether it is the correct role for them prior to applying and committing to the job.

All participants appreciated the importance of mentoring, corroborating with the findings of Rhodes and Brundrett (2009). Boerema (2011) explains that shadowing and mentoring tend to be the chosen approaches to leadership development since it enables specific skills to be developed through collaboration. Interviewees in studies conducted by Thorpe and Bennett-Powell (2014) and Rhodes and Brundrett (2008) found mentoring to be an effective professional development method.

Even though all participants could see the benefit of having a mentor, only participants 4, 5 and 6 had one, and only one was formalised when stepping into their middle leadership role. Participant 1 and 3 both indicated that there was an intention for them to have a mentor, however, this had not occurred. This may be due to the challenges that Hobson and Sharp (2005) explain such as the allocation of time and the need to train mentors. Participant 7
Participant 2 explained the missed mentoring opportunities stating:

‘there’s a lot of expertise here that’s not kind of being exploited and it’s also not dripping down’.

Participant 4 felt a mentor should be in school but out of department, so they have an understanding of the situation and people being discussed, but they also have a degree of separation. Participant 6 agreed:

‘Your mentor shouldn’t be your line manager because you can vent more’.

However, they also felt that someone that is more removed from the situation would not be able to provide the same level of insight.

Barnett (2008) explains the challenges of having a multi-faceted relationship with a co-worker, particularly in terms of ethics, if they are both your line manager and mentor. However, as Rhodes and Brundrett (2008) explain, it is also important that individuals respect their mentor otherwise it will not be an effective process. This demonstrates the personal nature of selecting a mentor, leading to the consideration that the mentor should be selected by the individual, instead of the organisation.

**Induction programmes**

Across all middle leaders, academic and pastoral, there was no induction programme. This is something all participants agreed would have been beneficial.

‘I think there probably could have been something that would have made me feel a little bit more reassured’

- Participant 2

This was also the case in research conducted by Thorpe and Bennett-Powell (2014) and Irvine and Brundrett (2016) whose research was in a very similar context. Interviewees in a study by Irvine and Brundrett (2015) found the initial phase of their roles challenging and steep learning curves. These feelings were echoed by participants in this study with participant 1 saying:
‘I was just chucked in at the deep end, lucky for me I swam but you know I think there was probably a point where I didn't know if I was going to drown or not’.

Participant 4 explained how there should be some sort of assessment to help you identify areas of weakness and training provided to support those. This is something that participant 6 undertook when they first began their role and found very helpful however, it is not standard practice in the organisation. Rhodes, Brundrett and Nevill (2008) emphasised the importance of assessing an individual’s leadership capabilities to ensure that they are the best person to undertake a particular role, demonstrating that is perhaps an approach that should be used more often.

**On the job experience**

Participants 1, 5 and 7 explain the value of on-the-job experience. OECD (2008) describes how experience is valued and often used by individuals to inform their decisions. With participant 1 saying:

‘that’s probably been more valuable than sitting in a classroom for an afternoon learning like the theory of stuff. I feel like the practical side of it is much more useful’.

However, participant 7 explains how you can’t really access this type of experience until you are in the role saying:

‘If you look at job descriptions for example for a middle leader, they pretty much say in the blurb have experience of being a middle leader for three years and you’re like well I can’t have that if I haven’t been one’.

They go on to say:

‘I think that’s the problem, it’s just trying to get the experience to get the job but expecting the experience to be there before you get the job’.

**Conclusion**

Analysing both the interview and questionnaire data has enabled the developmental needs of both aspiring leaders and middle leaders to be identified. Along with this, middle leaders identified a variety of valuable approached to addressing those needs. The findings of this study will be summarised in Chapter 5, along with recommendations both for the organisation and for further research.
Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Implications

(1001 words)

This study has enabled knowledge to be gathered from both aspiring and middle leaders within an independent secondary school. Throughout the research it has become apparent that professional development opportunities are lacking for both aspiring and middle leaders. This chapter begins by discussing the findings in relation to the research questions. It then goes on to mention the implications for the organisation, along with the limitations of the study and possible further research.

Development needs of aspiring leaders

The development needs of aspiring leaders varied somewhat when compared to the needs of middle leaders. There were only two common areas which were, understanding mental health issues and how to deal with difficult people. Overall, there were more training needs identified by aspiring leaders, which is unsurprising. The difference in these needs demonstrates the importance of aspiring leaders receiving training prior to the role, so that they are capable to meet the role requirements. In particular, aspiring leaders should undertake training which addresses the legalities of middle leaders, along with skills to support leadership tasks such as delegation and dealing with difficult people. Additionally, mental health training should be undertaken to support individuals from the start of their role, since as middle leaders in the research explained, mental health issues can appear at any time.

Many of the needs identified in this study corroborated with previous research, such as data analysis, holding teams accountable and dealing with underperforming staff, areas also highlighted in studies conducted by Thorpe and Bennett-Powell (2014) and Irvine and Brundrett (2016). However, the research also conflicted with some findings with Thorpe and Bennett-Powell (2014) who found time management a significant issue. This was not mentioned by either middle or aspiring leaders in this study. This could be due to contextual differences between mainstream and independent schools; however, more research would need to be carried out in both setting to determine a true link.
Valued professional development

Both middle and aspiring leaders felt frustrated at the lack of training that they had received, with both groups requiring more, corroborating with findings of a study undertaken by Irvine and Brundrett (2016). In particular, the lack of induction programme was mentioned frequently, with middle leaders discussing how this would have supported them early in their roles.

Even though many of the participants indicated the value of good training courses, there was also an emphasis that those alone are not enough to develop an effective leader. Mentoring and on-the-job experience were mentioned frequently as important components in facilitating leadership development. These findings support those by Rhodes and Brundrett (2008) in a wider review of leadership development across both primary and secondary schools in England.

Therefore, for members of the organisation to be adequately prepared for a leadership role, they should seek professional development using a variety of methods.

The leadership course provided by the organisation was mentioned favourably by several middle leaders, indicating that this, along with some shadowing may be a good place for aspiring leaders to start developing their skills. However, the course was described as being oversubscribed and places are often taken by current leaders. This approach would need to change to support aspiring leaders.

Implications for the organisation

In the study conducted by Rhodes and Brundrett (2009), the importance of a collaborative working environment, with opportunities to develop leadership capabilities through mentorship, shadowing and professional development programmes was emphasised to enable the development of future leaders. Even though some of these elements do occur, such as mentoring and shadowing, they are often informal and are not supported by induction programmes and training.

The concept of succession planning was discussed in chapter 2, with Rhodes and Brudrett (2009) highlighting the importance of ‘home-grown’ leaders. This was echoed in chapter 4, where a middle leader indicated that the school should be seeking to develop individuals prior to them undertaking leadership roles. To enable for better leadership preparation, a
two-pronged approach will be recommended to SLT when the findings of the study are presented to them. An outline of the approach can be seen below.

Stage 1 – Preparation for leadership role.

Aspiring leaders should be provided with the opportunity to shadow individuals in leadership roles that they would be interested in in the future. During this, they should discuss with the leaders the training that they felt has supported them in their role. Aspiring leaders should then be proactive in attempting to bridge the gap between their own skills and those needed to undertake the role, either with in-school training, or external training programmes. This should be supported by the school.

Stage 2 – Support in a new leadership role

New leaders should undertake an induction programme to enable them to understand the fundamental components of the role. This should as a minimum include mental health training, leadership skills such as delegation and difficult conversations, and the legalities surrounding the role. Furthermore, new leaders should be offered a mentor to support them for a minimum of a year, however, many middle leaders explained in the interview that they often still seek the support of others, even if they are several years into a role.

Limitations and further research

This study was small-scale, only gathering the ideas of 7 current middle leaders and 15 aspiring middle leaders. The research approach and methods allowed for the data required to be gathered effectively and enabled the research questions to be answered however, in order for wider conclusions to be drawn, a further study should involve more participants from several independent secondary schools to discover whether the findings are the same across the sector.

Now that the general themes have been established from the study, it may be possible to carry out further research using interviews and focus groups to enable deeper insights. This could enable for a more comprehensive induction programme to be developed that could perhaps be applicable across roles and organisations. However, caution should be taken due to the impact that contextual factors can have on training requirements.
Postscript – Narrative Critical Reflection

(569 words)

The reflection grid (Appendix 9) details the key points of reflection in regard to completing my dissertation. In this postscript I have discussed being an insider research and my challenges with academic writing due to being Dyslexic. I have decided to discuss these two areas as I feel that these have the most impact on my study, and my development respectively.

I feel that I entered into being an insider researcher quite blindly, having received feedback from TMA01 which made me realise I was rather naïve about the challenges of working with participants that I know. In particular, a large influencing factor was that the findings of the study would be presented to SLT. This is something that led to several participants in the interviews providing additional information once the recording and dictation software was switched off, something I mention in Chapter 4. Many of the insights provided by the middle leaders during this time would have been useful to the study and could have impacted on the findings. If I had instead been an outsider researcher, who was not presenting findings to SLT, I think the answers provided would have been more honest and more in depth. This is not something I had thoroughly considered prior to undertaking the study and I was surprised at the reluctance of participants to paint a full picture. If I were able to carry out the research again, I would either have the interviews conducted by someone external to the organisation or look at interviewing middle leaders from other organisations. However, this does not come without its own issues as due to the context dependent nature of the findings this may mean that they would not be as relatable to my organisation.

Throughout my life I have found extended writing and academic reading a challenge. This was one of the reasons why I wanted to complete a master’s degree, having shied away from these areas throughout my schooling and adult life. Due to the difficulties I face due to being Dyslexic, I knew that it would take me more time than most to complete given tasks such as reading academic texts and writing assignments. I therefore decided to undertake this masters when I had very little commitments and could donate significant portions of my time to my studies. However, throughout the course of the degree, I have had my first child, returning from maternity leave to a full time teaching role when the dissertation module
began. It has been challenging to ensure that I am able to keep up with the demands of the course, whilst also being a mother and a teacher. Prioritising and organising my time has been essential, something that I noted in my PDP. Honing my time management skills has not only supported me to complete this dissertation, but will also help in the future, where I hope to secure a leadership role. I now allocated my time in slots, using the pomodoro technique to ensure that I remain engaged and make the most of my time. Many of my academic skills have also developed, in my first year it would take around 5 hours for me to read and digest an article, it now takes me closer to 1 hour. I have found this masters essential to my development, personally, professionally and academically and I look forward to seeing where it will take me in the future.
References


Rhodes, C. and Brundrett, M. (2008) ‘What makes my school a good training ground for leadership development? The perceptions of heads, middle leaders and classroom teachers


Appendices

Appendix 1 – Interview Questions

Interview Schedule

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. This interview forms part of my research, looking at the professional development needs of aspiring leaders. The focus of this interview is to discuss the professional development that you have undertaken to support your role. This interview will be recorded. The audio from this interview will be deleted as soon as the transcript has been written up. I will also take brief notes during this interview, which will then be discussed with you at the end to ensure that I have an accurate summary of the information you have provided. After I have written up the full transcript, I will send you a copy for you to approve. If there is anything in the transcript that you are unhappy with, would like to be omitted, or altered in any way please let me know. You can withdraw from this study at any time, and you may choose to not answer any questions you wish. When the dissertation is written, I will ensure that you are not identifiable in the report. You will be provided with a copy of the report, and a summary of my findings once it is complete in September 2022.

What types of professional development did you undertake before you secured your role?
Which of these have been the most useful to you in your role?
Is there any training that you feel was not necessary?

When you first began your role, was there any mandatory training/an induction programme?
If yes, do you feel that this training has supported you in your role?

What areas of professional development did you identify within the first year of your role?
What type of training did you undertake to develop these areas?
How easy was it to access this training?

Do you have a mentor? If yes, does this help you address your development needs?

Do you think the training has improved your performance in your role?

What type of training would you recommend aspiring leaders undertake?

Do you have anything further you would like to add?
Appendix 2 – Ethical Appraisal Form

E822 Ethical Appraisal Form
Masters: Education, Childhood and Youth

NB: it should be noted that The Open University is unable to offer liability insurance to cover any negative consequences students might encounter when undertaking ‘in-person’ data collection. It is therefore very important that you follow appropriate research protocols which should include seeking Gatekeeper permissions to undertake any data collection within your setting and adhering to ethical principles for the safety of yourself and your participants.

Because ethical appraisal should precede data collection, a completed version of this form should be included with TMA02 for those developing a Small-Scale Investigation (SSI) and as part of the EMA submission for those completing an Extended Literature Review and Research Proposal (EP) form of the Dissertation.

Fill in section 1 of this document with your personal details and brief information about your research.

For section 2, please assess your research using the following questions and click yes or no as appropriate. If there is any possibility of significant risk please tick yes. Even if your list contains all “no” you should still return your completed checklist so your tutor/supervisor can assess the proposed research.

Section 1: Project details

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Student name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>PI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>Project title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>Supervisor/tutor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>Qualification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. MA pathway (where applicable)</td>
<td>Leadership and Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Intended start date for fieldwork</td>
<td>14.03.2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Intended end date for fieldwork</td>
<td>15.05.2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Country fieldwork will be conducted in</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you are resident in the UK and will be conducting your research abroad please check <a href="http://www.fco.gov.uk">www.fco.gov.uk</a> for advice on travel.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Section 2: Ethics Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Does your proposed research need initial clearance from a ‘gatekeeper’ (e.g. Local Authority, head teacher, college head, nursery/playgroup manager)?</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Have you checked whether the organisation requires you to undertake a ‘police check’ or appropriate level of ‘disclosure’ before carrying out your research? ¹</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Have you indicated how informed consent will be obtained from your participants (including children less than 16 years old, school pupils and immediate family members)? Your consent letters/forms must inform participants that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. ²</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Will your proposed research design mean that it will be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge/consent at the time (e.g. covert observation of people in non-public places)? If so have you specified appropriate debriefing procedures? ³</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ You must agree to comply with any ethical codes of practice or legal requirements that maybe in place within the organisation or country (e.g. educational institution, social care setting or other workplace) in which your research will take place. If required an appropriate level of disclosure (‘police check’) can obtained from the Disclosure and Barring Service (England and Wales), Disclosure Scotland, AccessNI (Northern Ireland), Criminal Records Office (Republic of Ireland), etc.

² This should normally involve the use of an information sheet about the research and what participation will involve, and a signed consent form. You must allow sufficient time for potential participants to consider their decision between the giving of the information sheet and the gaining of consent. No research should be conducted without the opt-in informed consent of participants or their caregivers. In the case of children (individuals under 16 years of age) no research should be conducted without a specified means of gaining their informed consent (or, in the case of young children, their assent) and the consent of their parents, caregivers, or guardians. This is particularly important if your project involves participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent (e.g. children under 16 years, people with learning disabilities, or emotional problems, people with difficulty in understanding or communication, people with identified health problems). There is additional guidance on informed consent on the Masters: Education and Childhood and Youth website under Project Resources.

³ Where an essential element of the research design would be compromised by full disclosure to participants, the withholding of information should be specified in the project proposal and explicit procedures stated to obviate any potential harm arising from such withholding. Deception or covert collection of data should only take place where it has been agreed with a named responsible person in the organisation.
Does your proposed design involve repetitive observation of participants, (i.e. more than twice over a period of more than 2-3 weeks)? Is this necessary? If it is, have you made appropriate provision for participants to renew consent or withdraw from the study half-way through?  

Are you proposing to collect video and/or audio data? If so have you indicated how you will protect participants’ anonymity and confidentiality and how you will store the data?

Does your proposal indicate how you will give your participants the opportunity to access the outcomes of your research (including audio/visual materials) after they have provided data?

Have you built in time for a pilot study to make sure that any task materials you propose to use are age appropriate and that they are unlikely to cause offence to any of your participants?

Is your research likely to involve discussion of sensitive topics (e.g. adult/child relationships, peer relationships, discussions about personal teaching styles, ability levels of individual children and/or adults)? What safeguards have you put in place to protect participants’ confidentiality?

Does your proposed research raise any issues of personal safety for yourself or other persons involved in the project? Do you need to carry out a ‘risk analysis’ and/or discuss this with teachers, parents and other adults involved in the research?

Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?

Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS or the use of NHS data?

If you answered ‘yes’ to questions 12, you will also have to submit an application to an appropriate National Research Ethics Service ethics committee (http://www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk/).

and it is essential to achieve the research results required, where the research objective has strong scientific merit and where there is an appropriate risk management and harm alleviation strategy.

Where participants are involved in longer-term data collection, the use of procedures for the renewal of consent at appropriate times should be considered.
Appendix 3 – Interview Information Letter

E822 Information letter for adults (aged over 18): Interviews

What is the aim of this interview?

The aim of the interview is to gain an individual’s perspective on an aspect of education, childhood and youth studies as part of a small-scale investigation for a Masters qualification designed to contribute to knowledge and practice in my chosen area of specialism. This particular interview is designed to help identify the professional development needs of aspiring leaders, answering the following research questions:

- Which aspects of leadership do aspiring leaders need to develop in preparation for middle leadership?
- What professional development do middle leaders value prior to, and within, the first year of securing their leadership role?

Who is conducting the research and who is it for?

This interview is part of my studies on the Open University Masters module E822 ‘Multi-disciplinary dissertation: Education, Childhood and Youth’. On this module I have an opportunity to design a small-scale investigation which will generate findings relevant to and of value to practice settings. The interview has been agreed with my tutor to be an important part of this design to allow me to include the perspectives of selected participants in addressing the above research questions. I will be analysing the data collected and reporting my findings in the dissertation I submit to the University as my final assessment for my Masters qualification.

Why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been chosen as your experiences and opinions would be highly valuable in helping to address a question which is considered one which will have value for your setting and others like it.

If I take part in this research, what will be involved?

The interview is intended to last no longer than 40 minutes and a place which I will negotiate with you to be mutually convenient. This might include an online interview setting, if you would prefer. Permission for this research has been granted from ….. If we will be using video conferencing software for the interview, you can choose whether to use your video and show your face or not. I would like to ask your consent to make an audio recording of our discussion so that I can refer back to what was said more accurately than would be possible just from my notes. If you do not wish to be audio recorded, I will accept your wish, and rely only on my written notes. Only I will have access to the audio recording. I do not need to share this with those at the University or in this practice setting. I will transcribe and anonymise the interview before sharing any part of this with my tutor or it form part of the final dissertation. Your contribution will be recognised by a participant number. Any other real names referred to during the interview will be removed and renamed.

What will we be talking about?

The focus of the interview will be to find out your experience of professional development you undertook prior to, and within the first year, of your first middle leadership role. I can share the questions with you in advance if you would like.

Will what I say be kept confidential?


Your participation will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018). No personal information will be passed from me to anyone else. Your consent forms will be stored safely in our professional setting as agreed with the senior leader overseeing the safe conduct of this research. In the case of the audio recording and my notes of the interview, these will be kept confidential and typed up as soon as possible. However, if you disclose anything during your interview which I consider means that you might be unsafe or have been involved in a criminal act, because this is a safeguarding concern, I will need to pass this immediately to the organizational Designated Safeguarding Officer. The anonymised records of the interview will be stored securely on password protected devices and the original notes and recording will then be destroyed. I will be submitting an analysis of the data collected from the interviews as part of my dissertation submitted as the end-of-module assessment. I also plan to present my findings to relevant audiences. I can confirm that neither you as an individual nor the setting will be identifiable in any of these reports and presentations.

What happens now?

After reading this information sheet, please review and complete the consent form. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you can withdraw your consent at any point up by letting me know, until the time I am using your data in my University assessments. As soon as you let me know you wish to withdraw, your consent forms and any data collected will be destroyed.

What if I have other questions?

If you have any other questions about the study I or my tutor would be very happy to answer them. Please contact me by email or contact my tutor Dr Don Bradley.
Appendix 4 – Interview Consent Form

ECYS/WELS

E822 INTERVIEWS CONSENT AND ASSENT FORM

(to be completed by all participants)

Please indicate YES or NO for each of the questions below and return the completed form by 1st May 2022 to Katherine Adams by email.

Have you read (or had read to you) the information about this interview? 
YES  NO

Has someone explained this interview to you? 
YES  NO

Do you understand what this interview is about? 
YES  NO

Have you asked all the questions you want? 
YES  NO

Have you had your questions answered in a way you understand? 
YES  NO

Do you understand it is OK to stop taking part at any time? 
YES  NO

Are you happy for the interview to be audio recorded? 
YES  NO

Are you happy with how your data will be stored? 
YES  NO

Do you understand that your and any other real names as well as any identifiable information will be removed from what will be shared after the interview? 
YES  NO

Are you happy to take part? 
YES  NO

If any answers are ‘no’ you can ask more questions. But if you don’t want to take part, please let me know and don’t sign your name.

If you do want to take part, please write your name and today’s date

Your name  ___________________________

Date  ___________________________

Return form to Katherine Adams by email.

Thank you for your help.
Appendix 5 – Questionnaire

The Professional Development Needs of Aspiring Middle Leaders - Research Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. This questionnaire aims to identify the professional development needs of aspiring middle leaders. Please attempt to answer all questions and provide written responses where necessary.

1. Have you attended any training courses in preparation for a future middle leadership role? If yes, please give details.

In this section, please consider the statement and select the category which best reflects your current level of ability. Please also select whether you feel that you need training on this.

2. Role Responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I can analyse data</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I can write reports</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I understand budgets and school finance</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know about developments in my subject specialism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to conduct a lesson observation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to conduct an appraisal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please select the areas that you would like training in

- [ ] Analysing data
- [ ] Writing reports
- [ ] Understanding budgets and school finance
- [ ] Developments within your subject specialism
- [ ] Conducting lesson observations
- [ ] Conducting appraisals
**Leadership skills**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can delegate effectively</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to manage students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand the difference between leadership and management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can manage my time effectively</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to make difficult decisions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to implement a change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please select any areas that you would like training in

- [ ] How to delegate
- [ ] How to manage students
- [ ] The difference between leadership and management
- [ ] How to manage your time
- [ ] How to make difficult decisions
- [ ] How to lead change
6. Legislation and Professional Bodies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I understand the legalities surrounding managing people</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know what CAMHS, CHUMS and MASH do</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a good knowledge of safeguarding</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand the legalities of conducting interviews</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Please select any areas that you would like training in

- [ ] The legalities surrounding managing people
- [ ] Working with outside bodies such as CAMHS, CHUMS and MASH
- [ ] Safeguarding
- [ ] How to conduct interviews legally
**8. People Skills**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am able to conduct difficult conversations</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have an awareness of cultural differences in the staff, student and parental bodies</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to deal with difficult people</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can communicate with others effectively</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to build relationships with others</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to deal with underperforming staff</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to manage others</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to inspire others</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to coach others</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. Please select any areas that you would like training in

- [ ] How to handle difficult conversations
- [ ] Cultural differences
- [ ] Dealing with difficult people
- [ ] How to communicate effectively
- [ ] Building relationships
- [ ] Dealing with underperforming staff
- [ ] How to manage others
- [ ] How to inspire your team
- [ ] How to coach others

10. Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am able to read body language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand the acronyms surrounding education and leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to use language effectively</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. Please select any areas that you would like training in

- How to read body language
- Understanding acronyms in education and leadership
- How to use language effectively

12. Mental health and wellbeing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I have an awareness of the pressures on staff</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I would know how to support a student with mental health issues</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. Please select any areas that you would like training in

- Awareness of pressures on staff
- Understanding mental health issues
14. Leadership Structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I understand the leadership structure in the school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand the roles and responsibilities of leaders in the school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. Please select any areas that you would like training in

- [ ] The leadership structure in the school
- [ ] The roles and responsibilities of leaders in the school
16. In which ways do you feel the school could support you in securing a leadership role in the future?

17. Is there anything further you would like to add?
Appendix 6 – Questionnaire Information Letter

Faculty of Wellbeing, Education, Language and Sport

Study related to Masters module ‘E822 Multidisciplinary Dissertation: Education, Childhood and Youth’

For participants invited to complete a questionnaire

E822 Information Letter: Questionnaires

Dear Participant,

I am currently studying on the Masters module ‘E822 Multidisciplinary Dissertation: Education, Childhood and Youth’ at the Open University in the Faculty of Wellbeing, Education, Language and Sport. My studies are being supervised by a personal tutor [who can be contactable via: WELS-ECYS-Masters@open.ac.uk] and am following research protocols recommended by the University which have been approved by a named supervisor in this setting. I am using a range of ways of collecting information to answer the following questions:

- Which aspects of leadership do aspiring leaders need to develop in preparation for middle leadership?
- What professional development do middle leaders value prior to, and within the first year of securing their leadership role?

As part of a small-scale investigation aimed to help me better understand the professional development needs of aspiring leaders and to share my findings with others for whom the findings will be relevant to changing practice.

I invite you to complete a survey by questionnaire. The questionnaire is estimated to take no longer than 20 minutes. This is to be completed online and I would appreciate the return of the questionnaire by 17th May 2022. This has been agreed with [name redacted]. Please feel free to ask me any questions about the questionnaire in advance of offering your consent to participate.

Information collected will be de-identified and kept confidential, being stored securely on password protected devices. If you do not consent to participate, this is absolutely fine: simply do not complete the questionnaire. It is not possible to withdraw your consent because the questionnaires are de-identified and therefore cannot be identified for removal.

If you consent, please complete and return the questionnaire. If you would like more information about the questionnaire before completing it, please contact me by email.

Yours sincerely,

Katherine Adams
Appendix 7 – Thematic Map of the Development Needs of Middle Leaders

- Delegation
- Managing students
- Understanding the differences between leadership and management
- Leadership Skills
- Time management
- Making difficult decision
- Change management
- Ability to have difficult conversations
- Awareness of cultural differences across stakeholders
- Dealing with difficult people
- Communication skills
- Ability to build relationships
- Managing underperforming staff
- Ability to manage others
- Inspiring people
- Coaching others

- Legislation and Professional Bodies
- The legalities of managing people
- Understanding what CAMHS, CHUMS and MASH do
- Safeguarding Knowledge
- Legalities of interviewing

- Language
- Reading body language
- Knowledge of educational and leadership acronyms
- Using language effectively

- Role Responsibilities
- Analysing Data
- Writing reports
- Understanding budgets and school finance
- Developments in subject specialism
- Conducting lesson observations
- Conducting appraisals
Appendix 8 – Thematic Map of the Professional Development Valued by Middle Leaders
# Appendix 9 – Reflection Grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Feedback received, targets achieved and areas of development worked on</th>
<th>How did this shape my dissertation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge and understanding:</strong> Targets, reflections or feedback relating to knowledge of current debate and issues in your specific area of focus; drawing out concepts and themes; choosing a focus area for your dissertation; identifying and overcoming ethical issues.</td>
<td>TMA02 – ‘You should be concentrating on what research approach you are adopting rather than ones which you are not.’</td>
<td>I find that sometimes I tend to want to summarise everything that I have read and all of the knowledge that I have gathered. Throughout this process I have realised that it is much better to select fewer ideas which are relevant and provide more insight, instead of always presenting a wide range of views.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PDP target – to complete the badged ethical researcher course</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Critical analysis and evaluation:</strong> Targets, reflections or feedback relating to justifying or challenging your personal perspective; interpreting and critically analysing evidence and methodologies from your own and others' research; analysing and evaluating themes and issues; sourcing and critically reviewing a wide range of publications; creating an academic argument using synthesis; comparing and connecting practice and theory.</td>
<td>TMA01 – ‘Not sure how valuable this research is for your own research, as you have noted here. Pakistan is a very different cultural and educational environment. It is better to source relevant lit from western educational contexts. UK if you can find them is best.’</td>
<td>I struggled to identify literature that was relevant to my study and related to my context. I developed my research skills which enabled me to use mostly UK-based literature within the literature review of my dissertation. I have also become more critical of the literature, assessing it and determining how it really relates to my study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PDP target – To source relevant literature in relation to my study</td>
<td>I have found this difficult and in the first draft of my literature review for my dissertation I had still collected literature from a wide range of contexts. I then systematically went back through the literature and ensured that it was either the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links to professional practice: Targets, reflections or feedback relating to: designing and/or applying research methods; developing ideas from previous research and frameworks; reflecting and</td>
<td>PDP target - To work out a study timetable to allow me to keep up to date with tasks</td>
<td>I have found this challenging since this year I have returned to work following maternity leave. However, I have mostly remained on track, in particular in relation to my dissertation timeline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A PDP target throughout the three years of this course has been to ensure that I take a critical approach.</td>
<td>correct context, or that I could justify its relevance.</td>
<td>I found critical analysis challenging at the start. Often feeling that if something was in an academic journal then it must be correct or the correct method of approach. As I have undertaken wider reading, I have discovered how contested many of the views are in educational leadership. I feel that throughout this dissertation I have had a critical stance, considering the viewpoints of different researchers and how they agree and conflict with each other, and the findings from the research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDP target – to ensure that I compare practice to theory</td>
<td>This is something that I found challenging and earlier in the course I felt that it was impossible for me to comment on this due to my lack of leadership position. However, since I have developed my theoretical knowledge of leadership, I have considered how this is put into practice by others in my organisation. I feel that I can now apply the ideas of theory to my practice and that this has been translated within my dissertation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>making adaptations during the research and writing process; addressing problems in research design; identifying implications for practice and professional debate; challenging your own assumptions; managing workload and personal motivation.</td>
<td>TMA01 – ‘I suggest that you revisit these research questions. Make sure that they are open ones rather than closed. I was not clear what was your main rq and which were the sub ones. There should be a main one. Think to yourself what are the issues I am investigating and formulate questions which will address those issues. Do not be too general or too specific.’</td>
<td>Going into this year I felt certain that I knew what my research questions were, and how I was going to approach my study. Throughout this year, I have changed my research questions and my approach following TMA feedback and also from reading the literature. I think this has allowed for a better study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TMA01 – ‘Being an insider researcher can present many challenges to the researcher. Do not minimise the issues that it raises.’</td>
<td>Even though I received this feedback, I still think that I underestimated the issues that it would raise. I think that being an insider research has influenced my results, since participants were unwilling to share some information until the recording and dictation software was switched off.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TMA02 – ‘The advantages and disadvantages of using such a scaling process should have been discussed in this TMA’</td>
<td>This is something that I researched in depth and commented on in the dissertation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Structure, communication and presentation:</strong> Targets, reflections or feedback relating to using academic style and referencing; presenting, managing and sharing information in different modes; communicating concepts, findings and ideas for different audiences.</td>
<td>TMA01 – ‘Make sure that the title for your dissertation is clear and unambiguous. Anyone reading it should be able to ascertain exactly what it is about. Not sure for example here what ‘development needs’ refers?’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TMA02 – ‘It is not clear who the participants will be in terms of the number, how selected and why?’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additionally, I have discussed the participants more fully.

TMA02 – ‘It is difficult to read this Part in the format in which you have presented it. The print is far too small. It should have been presented in a clear manner.’

Due to my presentation of part 2 of TMA02, I lost a considerable number of marks. Therefore, I have ensured that all parts of my dissertation, including the appendices are in size 12 font or larger.