

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

What are the Elements and Contextual Conditions Necessary for Successful Distributed
Leadership in Large Primary Schools? A Model Study.

Being a Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

In the University of Hull

By

Timothy John Bristow BSc. MEd.

September 2007

Contents

Introduction	3
Chapter One.	
Literature review of distributed leadership research, theory and context	6
Part 1 Theory and research into distributed leadership	6
Part 2 Distributed leadership: an idea whose time has come?	29
Chapter two.	
Research methodology	38
Chapter Three.	
Research findings and analysis	56
Description of research schools	57
Analysis of the semi-structured interview with the head teachers	62
Analysis of the focus group interviews	80
Analysis of the leadership meetings	107
Chapter Four.	
Conclusions and proposals	123
An evaluation of the reliability and validity of the research	123
An evaluation of the theory of distributed leadership discussed in the literature review when compared against the research findings	128
A proposed model of distributed leadership which could be applied to very large primary schools that aspire to being learning communities	140
Bibliography	143

Introduction

I was the head teacher of a very large primary school in Sheffield. The school has 649 children. It is a split site school separated by a busy main road. The average size of primary schools nationally in 2005 is 238 pupils. Only 1% of primary schools have more than 573 children, OfSTED performance and assessment report (2005). There are only 277 primary schools in the country with more than 601 pupils. Leading schools of this size has many advantages and disadvantages. One of the major disadvantages is the sense of isolation I felt in terms of support. Southworth (2002) identifies this in his research into leadership in large primary schools. Where head teachers in the average size primary school can turn to each other and local LEA advisors for guidance and support. In my experience there just are not the people on the ground who can support or advise on leadership in large primary schools. These primary schools are similar in size to small secondary schools. However, support and guidance from this phase is inappropriate because funding allows for leadership structures free from teaching commitments and tends to be based on subject departments. In primary schools leadership tends to be dependant on phase teaching teams. The maturity of the children means that it is important that the head teacher is a figure that they know and are confident to talk to. Distance from the children is not an option. Southworth (2002) identified that head teachers in large primary schools tended to be in their second or third headship coming from smaller institutions. This does not necessarily prepare head teachers for the challenges of leadership in larger schools. A major problem is that it is harder for head teacher's to have an impact on the children's learning because of their many responsibilities. However, this is their core purpose. In order to maximise the head teachers' impact in the classroom it is essential that the leadership is shared amongst others. Heroic models of leadership are just not feasible. However, this sharing is fraught with problems. Issues of trust, letting go, empowering colleagues but still taking responsibility for outcomes all demand a style of leadership that is empowering but structured to ensure that all in the school are working towards shared goals. Another aspect of this is the desire to create a learning community. Writers identify one of the key factors in the success of this goal as being teachers taking on the role of lead learner Senge (2003). It is therefore essential for those in positions of formal authority to empower others to lead from an ideological stand point as well as for functional reasons.

This context then is where my interest in distributed leadership has arisen. Out of a sense of necessity in order to improve leadership within the school I was head teacher and also as a principle in order to create a learning community. Distributed leadership is a term widely used at present and appears to mean a lot of different models of leadership to different people. (MacBeath (2005) identifies six types in his research on distributed leadership).

The national College for School Leadership and the Primary Leadership Project both advocate distributed leadership as a means of improving schools. However, the cluster of head teachers I belonged to had varying degrees of understanding of what distributed leadership might be. There is certainly no definitive description in the research or theory I have examined. In its simplest form distribution is about delegating responsibility to others based on the understanding that you cannot do it all yourself. Most primary schools in the country will be doing this. However, this can be made a much more effective and distinct style of leadership if it is recognised that as well as individuals being empowered to lead they work together on leadership activity. This will be referred to as leadership practice (Spillane, 2006). The most influential writers on distributed leadership are Spillane and Gronn. I intend to critically analyse and compare their theories identifying differences and common areas. I will examine the research in this subject in both the primary and secondary sector and also internationally in order to arrive at a theory of distributed leadership which could then be applied practically in school. In order to do this I will establish the difference between distributed leadership and other related styles, for example:

- democratic leadership
- shared leadership
- distributive leadership

I will also review the current research on the leadership styles of head teachers. This will enable me to clarify the relationship between distributed leadership and the head teachers' leadership. Finally I will review the research available about leadership in large primary schools and learning communities to establish the relevance of a distributed leadership style in these contexts. A qualitative research project examining distributed leadership in three very large primary schools will elaborate on the theory

and research into distributed leadership describing the characteristics and elements that make it successful in these schools. It will focus on the following key issues:

- The context (and situation) necessary for successful distributed leadership.
- The role of the head teacher.
- Leadership capacity of others in school.
- Interpersonal skills and relationships of leaders.
- The differences between individual leadership and leadership practice which is shared amongst leaders.
- The interactions between leaders when they work together on leadership practice.

The conclusions drawn from this research will enable me to enlarge on the present theory of distributed leadership. I will then be able to propose a model for successful distributed leadership in very large primary schools that aspire to be learning communities. It will clarify what distributed leadership is, what makes it distinct from other shared leadership styles and what key elements are necessary to make it successful. A partial model of leadership practice which is where leadership is not carried out by individuals but is a shared phenomenon will also be proposed as a framework for future research.

Chapter One

Literature Review of Distributed Leadership Research, Theory and Context.

This critical review will be in two parts. In the first part I will analyse theory and research into distributed leadership in order to establish clearly what it is. In the second part of the review I will discuss reasons why distributed leadership is described as “An idea whose time has come” (Gronn, 2001). This will be with reference to large primary schools as learning communities. Once completed, questions for research into distributed leadership in large primary schools will have been formulated.

Part 1. Theory and Research into Distributed Leadership.

In the last six years there have been a number of small scale research projects examining distributed leadership. For example: MacBeath’s (2004) study of eleven schools for the National College of School Leadership (NCSL), Ritchie’s (2004) research for the NCSL and Harris’s (2001) research on schools facing challenging circumstances. A number of positive characteristics of distributed leadership have been identified in successful schools. However, this has not helped to clarify what distributed leadership actually is. Ritchie (2004) states when discussing his research “exactly what distributed leadership involves remains somewhat unclear.” (Ritchie, 2004, p.3). The conclusion to his research certainly does not clarify an understanding of the term. Bennett, Wise, Woods & Harvey (2003) support this in their review of distributed leadership literature: “There are few clear definitions of distributed or devolved leadership and those that exist appear to differ from each other.” (Bennett et al, 2003, p.6). Bennett et al (2003) use of the terms distributed leadership and devolved leadership highlights another problem. There is a confusion of terms - democratic leadership, distributive leadership, shared leadership, dispersed leadership and delegated leadership. All these labels share common criteria but dilute clarity about the specifics of distributed leadership. I will return to the discussion of terms later in this review.

Bennett et al (2003) identify Gronn and Spillane as authors who specifically promote theories to the concept of distributed leadership. Spillane has continued research with schools at Northwest University in the U.S.A. and his most recent book (2006) gives a clarity to the concept of distributed leadership that has until now been lacking in the research. His research is part of the ‘Distributed Leadership Study’ which is a collection of projects being researched into K-12 schools (the equivalent of English secondary

schools). This study has been carried out over the last six years. In 2003 Gronn produced a book that enlarges on his earlier theories without necessarily developing them. This is most likely because his work is based on the re-analysis of existing research which differs from Spillane's (2006) work which specifically examines the distributed leadership concept in action. However, when analysing their theories it is clear that both authors have common links and strands which complement each other and help to clarify understanding rather than cause confusion. As stated above there are a number of other researcher and authors examining the concept of distributed leadership but I would argue that Gronn (2003) and Spillane (2006) lead the field in identifying specifically what a theory of distributed leadership is. I intend to critically review this theory using the research of others to illustrate aspects of it.

One common theme amongst authors is that distributed leadership is not a new trend but a way of looking at leadership in schools that already exists.

A distributed framework is in some respects a case of old wine in new bottles: it involves relabeling a familiar phenomenon. (Spillane, 2006, p.21)

Leadership has always been distributed, although some commentators have simply not countenanced this prospect. (Gronn, 2003, p.29).

The reason for this situation could be the focus there has been on single leaders and the characteristics and style of their leadership over the past thirty years.

Both Spillane (2006) and Gronn (2003) make similar distinctions between two forms of distributed leadership. Spillane (2006) identifies the leader plus aspect and the practice aspect and Gronn (2003) identifies distributed leadership as numerical multiple actions and also as concertive action. In the next section of this review I will examine the leadership plus or numerical multiple actions approach to distributed leadership as well as discussing the range of terms mentioned above that have characteristics in common with distributed leadership.

Distributed Leadership as Leader Plus or Numerical Multiple Actions.

Leader plus and numerical multiple actions have similar characteristics. In the leader plus aspect the emphasis is on individuals in school who take on leadership responsibility. This draws on a growing recognition that leadership cannot just be the domain of one head teacher. Southworth (2004) in his research on large primary schools

identifies that sixty seven percent of large primary schools have senior management teams of four to six individuals. He goes on to identify that the density of leadership he would recommend in school is based on a ratio of 1 to 4 members of staff. There is however no evidence to support this recommendation. Anecdotally, when I was the head teacher of a large primary school I was increasing leadership capacity to approximately this level in order to improve classroom instruction. This was based on my perception that as head teacher, I could only have a secondary effect on classroom practice. In a large primary school that effect is even more diluted (Southworth, 2004). Gronn (2003) identifies that all members of an organisation can have leadership actions in this situation. The acceptance of this belief nationally has led to the many initiatives for developing leadership skills and identified characteristics of leadership, an example would be the middle leadership training lead by the NCSL.

Spillane (2006) identifies that there are four factors in which distribution is dependant, these are: school size, school type, subject matter and developmental stage. In terms of school size there is very little research other than Southworth's (2004) work and Kimber's (2003) study of small secondary schools. Southworth (2004) defines a very large primary school as one with 601 pupils plus, whereas Kimber (2003) defines a small secondary school as one with less than 700 pupils. It is interesting to note that Kimber (2003) identifies that in small secondary schools leadership can be dominated by a single charismatic leader because there is a shortage of leadership posts and that distribution of leadership should be promoted, whereas Southworth (2004) argues for the importance of distributed leadership due to the large size of the primary schools discussed and that a single leader could not manage all leadership activity. This suggests differing perceptions due to scale. However, both writers agree to the promotion of distributed leadership for school improvement.

There are lots of small research projects into distributed leadership in a range of school types, for example the research by Court (2003) and Kelly (2002). They all recognise distributed leadership as leader plus, identifying activity in a group of people within a school. There are some flaws in these research projects which I will discuss when examining misuse of leadership terms. MacBeath (2005) has recognised three types of distributed leadership based on the leader plus aspect in his taxonomy. He has identified six categories of distributed leadership based on research in eleven schools of which

four were secondary, two were middle, three primaries and two were junior/infant. Although it is not possible to attribute one type of distribution to any particular type of school broad generalisations about distributed leadership have been made from this small research project. The three types that match the leader plus idea are formal distribution, pragmatic distribution and strategic distribution. These categories all suggest that the power to distribute remains firmly in the control of the school leaders with authority.

The idea of the subject matter determining leadership was first identified by Sherer (2004) when identifying the difference in the style of subject leadership in English in a school compared to mathematics. This was dependant on the importance of the subject. English was perceived as the most prestigious subject and in order to improve practice there were a range of leaders involved in its development. Weekly instruction meetings were held, teaching was regularly assessed and monitored and teachers were involved in a two way dialogue based on the common goal of improving practice. Put simply, mathematics was not seen as important as English and therefore it did not have the resource level to allow for it to be led by anyone other than the maths co-ordinator who merely advised people about improving practice and left them to get on with it. People listened and only made enquiries in order to clarify instructions given. I have not been able to discover any more research that examines this notion. However, anecdotally if I look at the curriculum in schools that I work in it is clear that core subjects certainly have greater networks of support than foundation subjects and often leadership of subjects is given to staff matching subject status to teacher ability or experience. This would appear to support the idea that prestigious subjects of the curriculum are supported by distributed leadership which necessitates a greater level of resources than other subjects receive.

The developmental stage of the school is, I think, a crucial factor in successful distributed leadership. All research has been carried out in schools deemed to be succeeding or where distribution is seen to be successful, for example Ritchie (2004), Harris (2001). In selection criteria Harris (2001) has used schools that are succeeding in difficult circumstances. Ritchie (2004) has selected schools that local education authorities (LEA) and others have recommended as having a successful distributed leadership style. On this basis influential institutions, for example, NCSL are heavily

promoting distributed leadership as “the preferred model for schools to adopt” (Ritchie, 2004, p.3) However Spillane (2006) states:

Some tout distributed leadership as a more effective approach to leading schools. Interestingly, many who take this stance have conducted no research on leadership from a distributed perspective. Others, working under the illusion that distributed leadership is a blue print for leading schools, bemoan the weak empirical knowledge base on the effectiveness of distributed leadership as an approach to leadership. (Spillane, 2006, p.102)

Although small research projects identified above prove this statement to be inaccurate, I can identify with the sentiments within it. This example from my own experience shows how the concept is being promoted by those who exhibit little understanding of the effect of this if the school is not developmentally able to benefit from distributed leadership. In the LEA I worked the school advisory department wanted to match professional development courses to the needs of schools. The first question on a questionnaire (Sheffield LEA 2005) to be filled in by head teachers was: “How would you judge the leadership of your school? (Please tick one of the following). Fully distributed, partially distributed, not distributed.” An inexperienced head teacher might feel that they must try and address distribution. However, there are situations in which distribution may not be appropriate. For example, a school may just have amalgamated and the extent of distribution at this stage could just be delegation of formal leadership roles, or the school may have just been judged to be in serious weaknesses, therefore a more authoritarian approach to leadership may be needed in order to raise morale and make the necessary improvements. It can be taken for granted as stated earlier that in most schools leadership is carried out by more people than the head teacher. However conscious development of distributed leadership is dependant as Spillane (2006) states on the development stage of the school and I would also argue on the development stage of the head teacher.

Gronn (2003) discusses a distributed division of labour, Spillane (2006) divides it into three categories:

Division of labour – different jobs carried out by different people. For example, in the school I worked in a member of staff was responsible for leading teaching and learning for children with special needs, a task I would not be able to manage because of other responsibilities.

Co-performance - two or more people working collaboratively over the same activity. For example, we organise subject leadership into teams of three or four people with a variety of experience and skills.

Parallel performance – More than one person takes on the role and activity is duplicated. For example, I had two deputy head teachers who have similar job descriptions, but the size of the school on a split site meant there was a need for replication of roles.

A key point here is that an assumption is made that for distributed leadership to work, all staff have common aims and goals. However, Spillane (2006) identifies that people can work in the way described by these categories but at odds with each other. An example of this is the research by Storey (2004). The head teacher and head of science believed in distribution of leadership but found themselves in conflict because the head teacher's leadership was based on a school effectiveness agenda whilst the head of science believed in school improvement. Storey (2004) states that because the two staff members did not have a shared philosophy that distributed leadership failed. I disagree with her. All this research highlights is that a framework of distributed leadership does not have values. People can be taking part in leadership activity successfully, but it may not be for the good of the school. Therefore it can still exist but can work to negative as well as positive outcomes.

Spillane (2006) describes three ways in which distributed leadership occurs. The first way is by design or as MacBeath (2005) states: formally, pragmatically or strategically. This means either creating formal or informal leadership positions or structures and routines that allow distributed leadership to take place. In MacBeath's (2005) taxonomy formal distribution is hierarchical. This is based on delegation by the head on the understanding that one person cannot do it all. Pragmatic distribution due to an increasing workload involves delegating to those who can lead and not those who cannot. Finally strategic distribution means that in order to achieve school goals teams rather than individuals are created. New appointments are judged on their ability to lead within teams. As MacBeath (2005) states these categories are not mutually exclusive and you would expect to see aspects of all these at work in school. An example would be the necessity of all head teachers and governors to formalise and agree a school staffing structure by January 2006. In the structure established in the school I worked in you could recognise all three of these elements. A cynical distortion of these categories

can be seen in The Massachusetts Department of Education (2005) plan for the distribution of leadership. A formal leadership structure was to be imposed on schools based on the distribution of leadership recognising that school principals could not do it all. However, it becomes clear that the reason for this emphasis on distribution is to avoid the need, for economic reasons, to create additional posts for leadership work.

In tight financial times, the answer is not to hire new staff, but to take a critical look at all available internal and external resources. (MDE, 2005, p.1)

In my experience distributed leadership is more demanding on resources than less because of the time others in school require to do leadership tasks. The second way that leadership occurs is by default. This is where leaders who may not be in a formal position identify that they can lead an activity in order to improve the education in the school. They would take it upon themselves to lead. An example in the school I worked is the foundation co-ordinator identified that in order to support early literacy skills parents needed help. She established training for parents which has now become a regular part of practice. At no time was this task delegated or expected. Once established however its value was recognised by all. Finally leadership can be distributed in a crisis. An example from my own experience is that I was involved in an accident a few years ago which meant I was off work for a number of weeks, we were rehearsing for a school production, a curriculum area I took a lead in. Colleagues recognised the need to take control of rehearsals in my absence to ensure success of the venture. A key element of this example is that colleagues that voluntarily took charge were not recognised formally as school leaders but were willing and capable to take over in order to achieve commonly accepted goals. Once the performance was over the group of leaders disbanded.

What I have described above then is distributed leadership as it is most commonly recognised by teachers and head teachers in schools. A range of leadership activities carried out by people working in school either individually or in teams. People who take the lead may or may not be in formal positions of leadership. They are carried out either by design, or default or due to a crisis and the extent of the distribution is dependant on the size of the school, the type of school, the subject or the state of development of the school. It is hoped that all would be working to shared goals and aims. However I do not think that this description distinguishes distributed leadership from shared

leadership, collaborative leadership etc. In fact it helps to explain the difficulty researchers and authors have in defining distributed leadership. All the research I have found except aspects of MacBeath (2005), Spillane (2006) and Hobby et al (2005) examine distributed leadership as defined in the terms above. Examples would be Storey (2005), Kelly (2002), Harris (2002). Terms for shared leadership are interchanged, it is therefore very difficult for the reader or practitioner to understand the difference between distributed leadership and similar sounding forms of leadership.

Southworth (2004) makes a distinction between shared leadership and distributed leadership in large primary schools. Shared leadership is where leadership is shared between the head and a deputy, whereas distributed leadership is based on the need to give middle leaders leadership responsibility therefore enlarging the number of leaders. I cannot personally see that there is a difference in these two types of leadership based on this simple definition and if that is all the reader has to go on then distributed leadership does not exist as a separate concept. Kelly (2002) states that:

Delegating or distributing leadership tasks does not, however, always bring about learning about leadership. The terms delegated and distribution suggest transfer and division. Shared leadership on the other hand suggests collaborative responsibility. (Kelly, 2002, p.25)

This illustrates again the confusion in terms and common understandings. Oduro (2005) gives definitions of various types of leadership - dispersed, democratic, distributive, collaborative and shared, but makes clear that the thread that runs through them all is that more than one person takes part in the leadership activity. It is easy to argue from these definitions that there is little to distinguish them from the description of distributed leadership given above. Except that distributed leadership is defined by Oduro (2005) as leadership given by a hierarchy to others whereas distributive leadership is shared by the collective.

Democratic leadership is another term that is interchanged with distributive leadership. The attraction, as explained by Senge (2000), is that practitioners perceive distribution being based on a more horizontal and less hierarchical management structure. That all can contribute to school development. However, I would argue that distributed leadership can be anything but democratic. This is best illustrated in the following table

produced by Woods (2004) where he clearly draws distinctions between distributed and democratic leadership.

Table 1. Comparative profiles of distributed and democratic leadership

Distributed leadership	Democratic leadership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Analytic concept</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – though often with implicit normative interpretations – intellectual roots serve analytic emphasis (e.g. activity theory) ● <i>Emergent and dispersed</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – consists of additive and concertive action and is distinct from leadership by single leader ● <i>Inclusive, based on contingent status</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – boundaries of participation are circumscribed according to organisational needs, priorities, etc. ● <i>Formally neutral</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – formally neutral toward dominant legitimacies of co-ordination (exchange and rational authority) ● <i>Instrumental autonomy</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – partial deployment of democratic rationalities: decisional participation is not defining feature; ethical scope of dispersed initiative is limited and pragmatic; discursive and therapeutic rationalities valued according to organisational aims – creative space judged in instrumental terms ● <i>Functional toward human capacities</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – in practice often emphasizes leadership distribution according to the market or organisational value of people’s discrete attributes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Analytic and normative concept</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – intellectual roots extend to broader theorisations of modernity (e.g. of alienation, instrumental rationality) ● <i>Emergent and dispersed</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – mostly additive and concertive action, but can include leadership by single leader within circulation of initiative ● <i>Inclusive, based on human status</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – open boundaries of participation, with aim of equal distribution of externalised authority, voice, esteem and internal authority ● <i>Oppositional</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – opposed to dominance of instrumental rationality embedded in exchange and rational authority ● <i>Inherent autonomy</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – full play of democratic rationalities: decisional rationality and ethical rationality, with wide scope extending to fundamental values questions, are integral, combined with discursive and therapeutic rationalities – creative space embraced as being necessary for human creativity ● <i>Integrational toward human capacities</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – seeks recombination and engagement of all creative human capacities through overcoming of internal contradiction

(Woods, 2004, p.22.)

Here Woods (2004) highlights that distributed leadership is focussed on the needs of the institution and can have hierarchical structures, whereas democratic leadership is centred more on the principle of shared leadership for all for its own sake.

I hope that the paragraphs above highlight the confusion and lack of agreement about the different leadership headings. If distributed leadership was merely based on the first

aspect identified by Spillane (2006) as leader plus and Gronn (2003) as numerical multiple actions then any term could be argued as valid and interchangeable. However I think that the key to the unique nature of distributed leadership is in the second form identified by Spillane (2006) as the practice aspect and Gronn (2003) as concerted action. In the next section I will explain this form of distributed leadership.

Distributed Leadership as Practice or Concertive Action.

Gronn (2003) states that although distribution can be construed as the sum of its individual parts as explained in the last section it can also be examined “holistically, as conduct comprising joint or concertive action, rather than aggregated individual acts.”(Gronn, 2003, p.35). Spillane (2006) describes this idea as leadership practice as “stretched over individuals”. Unfortunately, there is very little research that describes these ideas other than the work of Spillane (2006). MacBeath (2005) attempts to address this element in the final categories of his taxonomy, Court (2003) describes some case studies in which you can recognise concertive action, and finally Hobby et al (2005) in their research on influence in informal leaders identifies concertive action. I will illustrate the theory of leadership as practice or concertive action with examples from the research just listed, as well as explaining why I think this aspect of distributed leadership has been neglected.

Gronn (2003) identifies three forms of concertive action. First he identifies spontaneous collaboration. He gives as an explanation a set of two or three individuals with differing skills or abilities and perhaps from different levels of authority in the organisation who pool their expertise and regularise their conduct to solve a problem. Once solved the group may disband. The second form is intuitive working relations. A close understanding is built up between two or more people over a period of time due to a close working relationship. They take part in conjoint action “Leadership is manifest in the shared role space encompassed by their partnership.” (Gronn, 2003, p.35). Partners in this relationship are aware of themselves as co – leaders. Trust is a key element in this relationship and it can be compared to intimate personal relationships. In an earlier research assignment I identified that within schools you can identify what I called “power teams.” These are teams that manifest the loyalty and value the individual has for the team. The first loyalty appears to be to the team rather than the school. I identified that team members had a willingness to try change for the teams’ sake due to

a feeling of mutual respect even when not wholly in agreement with the decision. They had a confidence to argue within the team on the basis that their contribution would be at least valued if not acted upon. This description would appear to illustrate intuitive working relations. The third type of concerted action is the institutional practices that are utilized by an organization in order to promote collaboration. Some are formal, for example departments, divisions and committees whilst others can be informal. Within the categories of spontaneous collaboration and institutionalized practices, Gronn (2003) has only presenting conditions where concerted action may take place, it could be no more than numerical multiple actions as described earlier. I think the key to concerted action in distributed leadership is in the second category of intuitive working relations. If the conditions are as described the concerted action of the leadership in these teams is going to be greater than the sum of its individual parts. This then for me is crucial in identifying distributed leadership. Schools can identify and design distributed leadership frame works which make up elements of leader plus aspects, Spillane (2006), and are perfectly valid and can be described as distributed leadership. However, the goal for head teachers in order to improve instruction in school is to create the conditions that allow for this concerted action through intuitive working relationships that mean that the quality of leadership is greater than the sum of its parts.

Spillane (2006) attempts to describe the complications of this concertive, intuitive relationship in the following way. He calls it co-performance. It is essentially the interactions between leaders and followers. Spillane (2006) uses the following two ideas to describe this. First the notion of interdependency between activities, Thompson (1967) and second the notion of heedfulness, Weick and Roberts (1993). The notion of interdependency between activities comes in three types:

Reciprocal interdependencies, in which each activity requires inputs from the other

Pooled interdependencies, in which activities share or produce common resources but are otherwise independent.

Sequential interdependencies, in which some activities depend on the completion of others. (Thompson, 1967, p.58)

As Spillane (2006) explains, the notion of interdependency only helps us understand how the group operates in leadership practice. It allows us only to examine individual leadership practice within a group. This is recognition of a development in Spillane's understanding of distributed leadership from his earlier work where he allied leadership

traits of transformational leadership closely to the qualities necessary for distributed leadership to be “stretched over two or more individuals” (Spillane, 2001). Lakomski (2002) identified this fault in his work when discussing the importance of distributed cognition as a key aspect in distributed practice. He argued that it was in the actions between individuals rather than in individual leadership practice that an understanding of distributed leadership would be gained. In order to gain a full understanding of the concertive action aspect of distributed leadership we need to move away from analyzing the individual leadership practices within the group – as Spillane (2001) had done in supporting transformational leadership, and examine the shared cognition or actions of the individuals that made distributed leadership interdependent. This then is where the notion of heedfulness arises. Groups act heedfully when “they act carefully, intelligently, purposefully and attentively” (Spillane, 2006, p.59). Members of the group consider what they do in relation to other members of the group and not in terms of their own individual actions. Wieck and Roberts (1993) identify three processes in groups acting heedfully:

Group members create the social norms between group members by acting as though these norms exist.

Acting as though there are social norms, people construct their actions by envisioning a system of joint action and connect that constructed action with the system they envisage.

The result is a system of practice that resides not just in the individual but also in the interrelating or interacting between their actions.
(Wieck & Roberts, 1993, p.357)

It is important therefore in order to analyse distributed leadership practice to go beyond the examination of actions of individuals and to examine interactions between them. The research available tends to focus on activities of individuals in order to illustrate the concertive action aspect of distributed leadership. For example, Court (2003) in her research on teacher leadership collectives examines the roles that participants take in distributed leadership. She appears to accept that all her examples of teams working together effectively are examples of conjoint distributed leadership, Gronn (2003), which she accepts as meaning leadership is concertive. This may be so, however as I discussed earlier I could perceive categories or conditions that should create conjoint leadership that only create leader plus activity. This example she gives shows how a misunderstanding of her own research could lead to the wrong conclusions about a situation being reached:

The participants were enthusiastic about their approach and the staff felt success and a sense of sustainability. Unfortunately after several years, personnel changes caused the leadership team to erode. As there were not three teachers willing to participate in the lead team, the school moved in 2002 to having one director This suggests that the increasing demands impacting negatively on head teacher improvement, are impacting also on shared leadership teams.

(Court, 2003, pp.19-20)

It maybe that the leadership team eroded because of additional demands, but in my experience if a team works enthusiastically, has an intuitive relationship, (Gronn, 2003) and is heedful to one another, (Spillane, 2006) then it will be robust enough to cope with greater demands. This therefore illustrates the importance of research that focuses on the interrelationships within teams, and not their actions. This will inform and enable school leaders who are the architects of team building within schools for instructional success so that the conditions can be created for concerted action within a distributed leadership framework. MacBeath (2005) attempts to describe a concertive action approach to distributed leadership in his taxonomy. His sixth category is “distribution as cultural”. He describes this as

Leadership is expressed in activities rather than roles or through individual initiative. Distribution as a conscious process is no longer applicable because people exercise initiative spontaneously and collaboratively, with no necessary identification of leaders or followers. (MacBeath, 2005, p.362)

This describes the actions of individuals but again avoids their interactions which are crucial if concertive action is to be effective. As Lakomski (2002) observes, in this situation leadership practice becomes so embedded that it becomes invisible to the point that all activity could be argued to be leadership activity. Liethwood (2005) makes a similar point when he states cynically that everyone is a leader, who then are the followers? Is this form of leadership practice not just collaboration rather than distributed leadership? I would emphasize that the key to this is in understanding the interactions between members in their co-performance rather than their individual contributions to activities which is crucial to understanding how to distribute leadership successfully.

By analysing interactions in the co-performance of leadership practice Spillane et al (2004) have identified three forms of distribution:

Collaborated distribution characterises leadership practice that is stretched over the work of two or more leaders who work together in place and time to execute the same leadership routine.

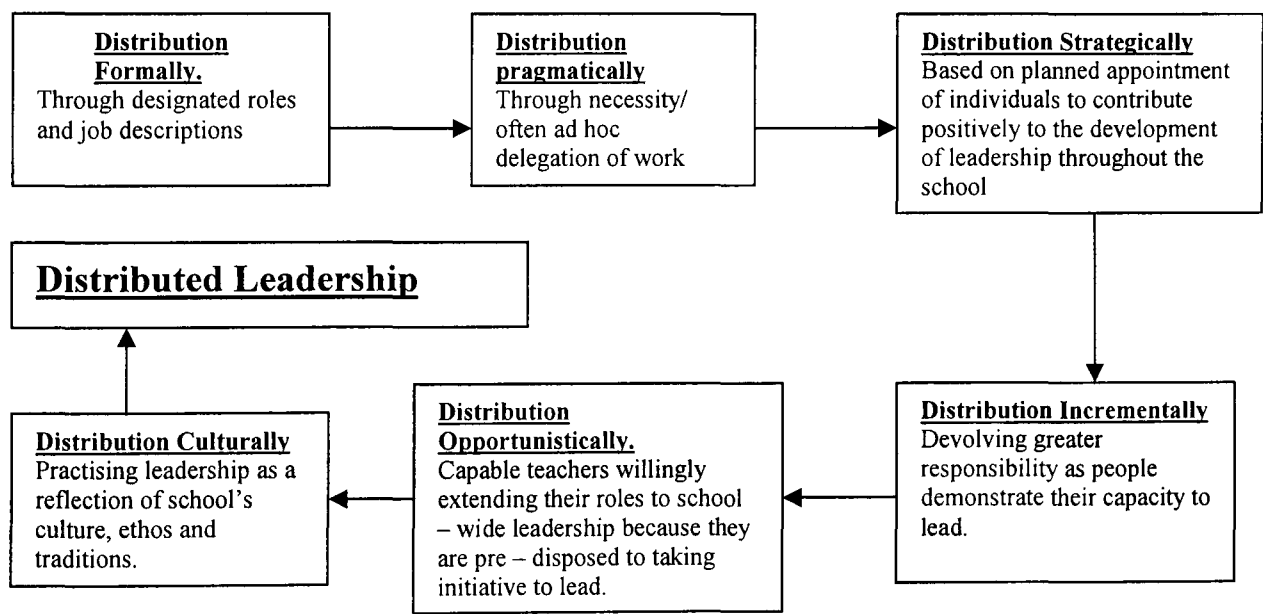
Collective distribution characterises practice that is stretched over the work of two or more leaders who enact a leadership routine by working separately but interdependently.

Co-ordinated distribution refers to leadership routines that involve activities that have to be performed in a particular sequence.

(Spillane et al, 2004, p.37)

As discussed previously the key to these practices being distributed is in the interactions between the co-performers and not the actions they take as individuals.

Writers and researchers have tried to capture the essence of this notion. As mentioned previously MacBeath (2005) in his research has identified six categories of distributed leadership. As illustrated below:



MacBeath (2005) perceives from his research that distributed leadership is a developing and evolving process for schools. From top down leadership to what he calls in the final three categories “bottom up” leadership. Although cultural distribution captures the notion that all teachers in schools can take part in leadership activity it misses the crucial aspects discussed associated with co-performance. Another concern I have with this model is the suggestion that it is developmental and reflects the sophistication of formal leaders and their schools. I would argue that examples of all these categories of

distributed leadership could be identified in any single school. For example in the school I led:

Formal distribution takes place through staff job descriptions – the school bursar has a clear and explicit leadership role over support teams in school.

Pragmatically I found that leading extended schools initiatives was increasing my work load considerably therefore I altered the role of the special needs co-ordinator to Every Child Matters co-ordinator and changed her contract from three days a week to five days a week.

Strategically I set a school staffing structure that promoted key staff to leadership positions within the school because I had identified that these teachers have the capacity and ability for the work.

Incrementally my young literacy co-ordinator demonstrated her leadership and instructional skills and therefore she was offered the opportunity to work with less skilled teachers in order to improve their teaching.

Opportunistically the example used earlier where the foundation co-ordinator took the initiative to develop parent learning opportunities.

Culturally teaching teams and curriculum teams take for granted leadership in their domain as a right.

I hope these examples demonstrate that as formal leader I would use all these categories of distributed leadership unconsciously. However they still do not capture the co-performance or concertive action as described, of distributed leadership, “leadership stretched over two or more people” Spillane (2006). I am going to call this value added distributed leadership. You can create the conditions for all forms of distributed leadership; you can ensure that teachers have the capacity for leadership. However, more emphasis as Lakomski (2002) explains, needs to be focussed on the shared cognition and intuition of teams within schools to get value added distributed leadership. Shared cognition and intuition are characterised by interpersonal characteristics. Therefore for distributed leadership to attain the value added status, as well as ensuring all have leadership capacity you need to ensure that the interpersonal characteristics necessary for distributed leadership are identified and developed. I will discuss these characteristics later in this review. Many researchers in this field use this quote of Gronn’s to describe the uniqueness of this aspect of distributed leadership. An example would be Harris (2002) “leadership is seen as fluid and emergent rather than as a fixed phenomenon (Gronn 2001)”. Unfortunately you never see any examples of

fluidity to help the reader to understand this romantic and abstract notion. It is a smokescreen. Better to appreciate that if this aspect of distribution is successful in schools then leadership is manifest in the activities teachers take part in rather than residing in the individual.

In this section I have identified that distributed leadership is made up of concerted actions (Gronn, 2003) or leadership practice (Spillane, 2006) which takes it beyond the individual actions of leaders. This I have called value added distributed leadership. This is dependant on intuitive relations between leaders (Gronn, 2003) and between the interactions rather than the actions of the co-performers (Spillane, 2006). I believe that this aspect of distributed leadership can work alongside the more individualistic description of distributed leadership explained in the last section. Schools are always going to have activities and tasks that need to be carried out by individuals as well as having groups of leaders working together. If schools are able to create the conditions for successful leadership practice then the effect on learning is going to be greater than the sum of the individual parts – value added distributed leadership. The value added aspect of distributed leadership is what distinguishes it from other forms of shared leadership mentioned earlier. The problem as I have identified, is that little research focuses on the interactions of leaders rather than the actions which means that making recommendations for improving leadership is difficult.

Distributed leadership in schools is dependant on other factors, for example context and culture. Spillane (2006) calls this “situation”, Gronn (2003) describes this in activity theory. In the next section I will discuss the relationship between distributed leadership and these other factors. The term leadership practice will be used throughout the rest of this thesis to represent the idea of leadership as manifest in the interactions and intuitive relationships between leaders. The term leader plus will be used to represent the leadership activity of individuals. The term value added distributed leadership will be used to describe the effect of successful leadership practice.

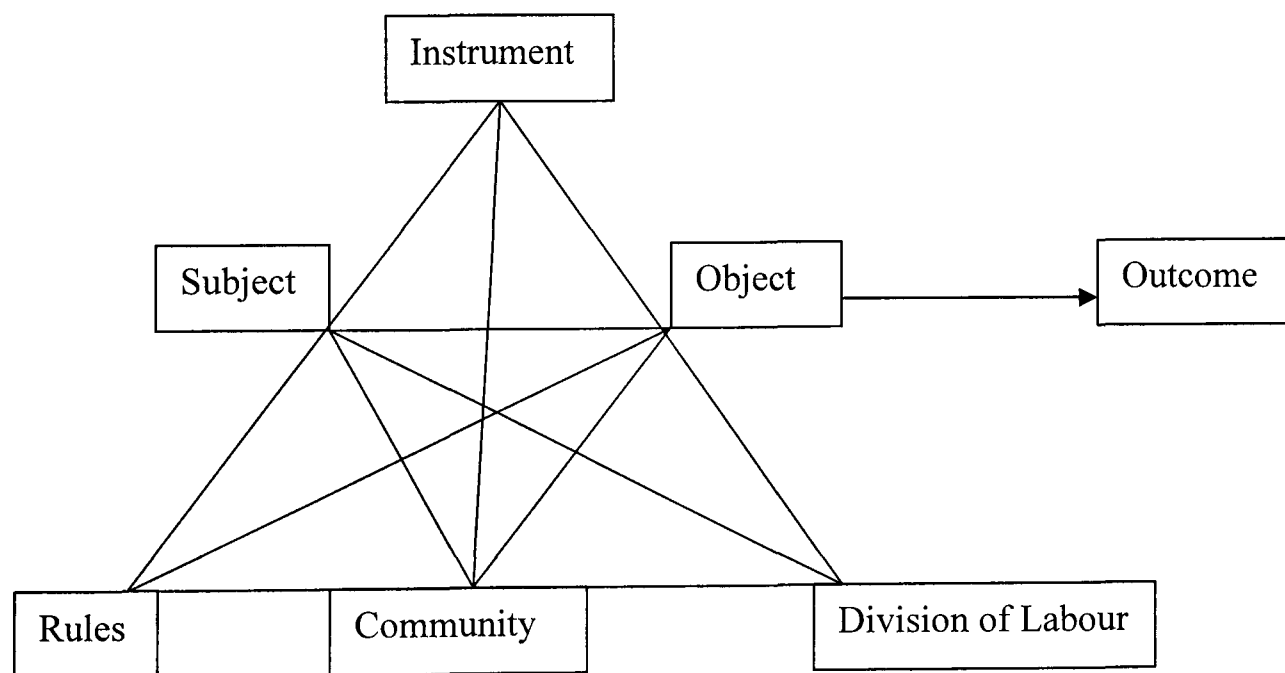
Distributed Leadership and Situation.

The situation as described by Spillane (2006) has many contributing factors, for example routines, structure and tools. An example of a leadership tool maybe a lesson observation proforma. These factors of situation do not just enhance the leadership

practice but can act as go – between and mediators in our interactions with others. In these interactions practice is refined and takes shape. Situation can therefore define leadership practice. The activity theory framework used by Gronn (2003) helps to explain this more clearly.

In order to analyse distributive leadership as a holistic phenomenon Gronn (2000) uses an activity theory model based on the work of Vygotsky (1978), Leont'ev (1978, 1981) and Engestrom (1999). Activity represents human behaviour as it engages with the world. Flows of these activities comprise the constituent elemental stuff of human existence (Leont'ev, 1978). Gronn (2000) claims there are advantages to the use of activity theory as a means of analysing leadership in organisations:

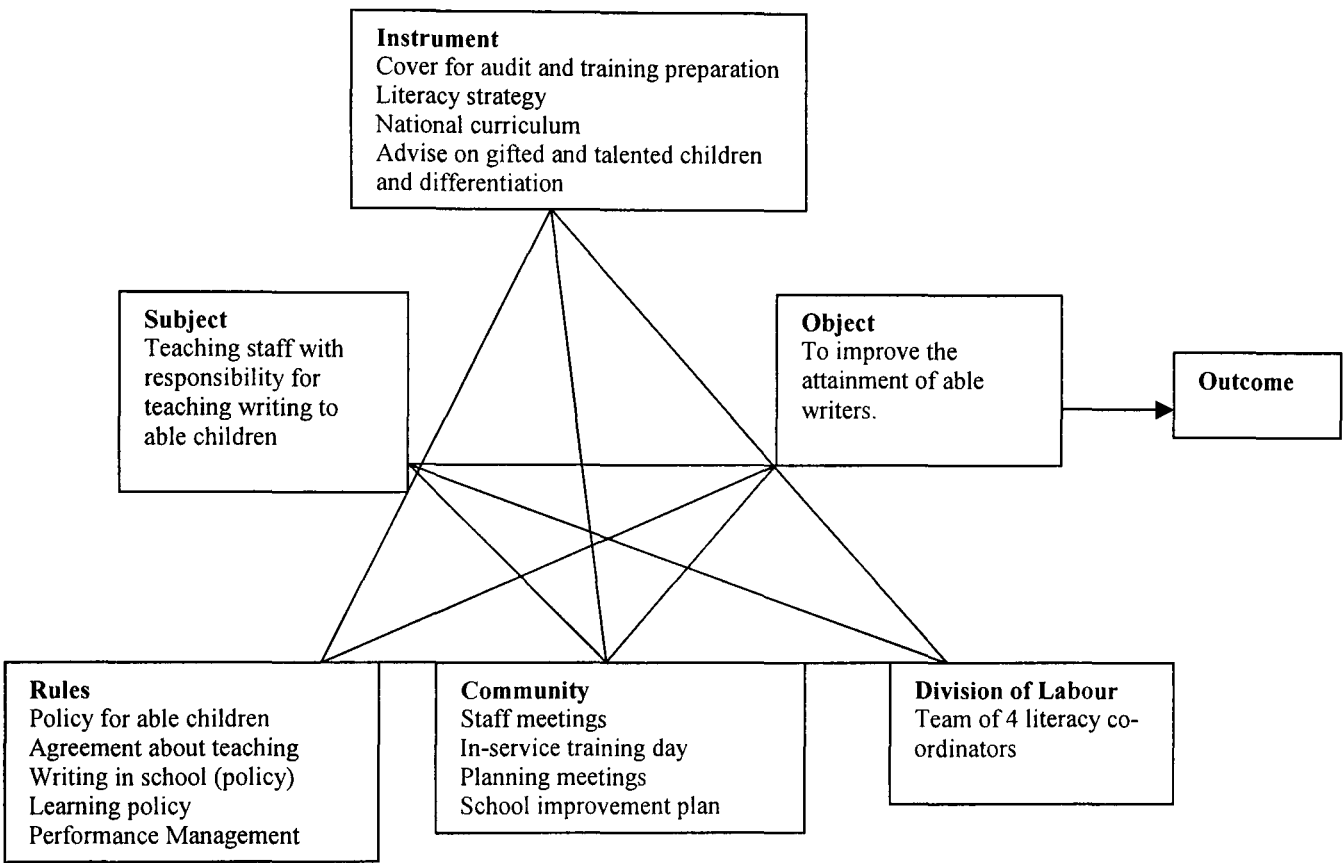
- It provides a thorough analysis of the actions involved in accomplishing the work of organisations.
- It is a developmental and emergent approach to leadership which allows for an understanding of the contribution of leadership to learning.



Engestrom (1999) provides this structure which shows the key components of activity.

What the diagram above shows is that the subject (individual or group) have an objective to their work. In order to achieve the objective the subject mediates through the other factors. The instruments are the tools and artefacts which represent the accumulated knowledge and understanding of the organisation (policies, procedures). The subject – object relationship is subjected to cultural rules implicit within a culture of community and embedded in a division of labour. This model does not define an activity but allows for the analysis of particular activities. A critical point is that the

objectives express the needs and the actions fulfil the purposes needed to achieve the objectives. This means that the actions are dependant on each other in order to achieve the objective. These actions may only make sense when viewed in the context of the objective.



An illustration of the activity structure model in practice.

Above is an illustration of this model based on the work carried out in school to improve the standards of attainment of able writers. It is clear when looking at this diagram that the leadership is constrained by the history and culture of the school or its situation (Spillane, 2006).

Another interesting aspect of this model is that it allows for changing situations over time. The effect of leadership action by achieving objectives may lead to changes in the factors. For example, if my leadership goal is to improve the instruction of reading I will lead within the constraints of this model, however as a result of achieving my outcome The English policy maybe revised, this then changes the rules so that the next time leadership activity takes place in this area the model has evolved. I find this to be a very useful tool in analysing distributed leadership activity and giving a framework for the design of leadership activity. It also reinforces the fact that leadership in whatever form described is dependant on situation. The advantage of distributed leadership is that this is clearly recognised in the theory. This is becoming recognised as an important

aspect of leadership, for example Southworth (2004) states that: “Possibly we have dwelt too much on the notion of the leader as a person at the expense of examining other processes and organisational features.” If I return to the earlier explanation Court (2003) gave for an erosion in distributed leadership due to greater demands, if this is accepted then this could be used as an example of not paying due attention to the situation and its impact on leadership.

In this section I have explained how the situation is an important factor in the success of distributed leadership. As Spillane (2006) states “tools and routines are the vehicles through which leaders interact with one another and with followers.” As highlighted earlier I would now like to discuss the interpersonal characteristics that are needed in order to add value to distributed leadership.

Interpersonal Characteristics.

As explained earlier it is important to develop leadership skills amongst teachers and others to ensure that improvement in school takes place at all levels. However, in order to achieve the value added aspect of distributed leadership we need to recognise other characteristics which give “distributed leadership synergy” (Gronn, 2003). Gronn identifies two features that are apparent in this idea that contribute to the concept of “stretched over” (Spillane, 2006) leadership. These are reciprocal influence and synergy.

Synergy helps when trying to understand the notion of intuitive conjoint action described earlier which would help to achieve value added distributed leadership. The development of this synergy would be created over a period of time as team members developed an understanding of each other and the way they work. It could be described as work friendships. Hobby et al (2005) in their research on connected leadership identify these friendships as partnerships where teachers form tight, distinct groups. Interestingly they found that these tended to be people of a similar age and of the same sex. However, this was a small study of eighteen schools and their findings are not transferable. This contradicts the notion of creating teams of leaders with differing skills and experience in order to create “stretched over leadership” as described by Spillane (2006). However, although an interesting observation it is not one that I take too seriously. The important point as re-enforced by Southworth (2004) is that for informal leadership to take place, as he calls it, leaders need to address and be aware of the

importance of the social relations and arrangements in a school in order to enable intuitive conjoint action.

Reciprocal influence is a very important constituent to the success of adding value to distributed leadership. Gronn (2000) identifies influence as the dynamic that facilitates activity. He sees as a fault research that has identified power being the same as influence. Like the distributed / focussed continuum of leadership dependant on its basic constituent's power and influence can be concentrated or distributed. Influence can be hidden or obvious and can explain action as well as in-action. For example, action may not take place because person A is aware of the negative reaction of Person B. if a course of action is suggested. Person B. is not aware of this but because of this covert influence action taken is affected (Gronn, 2000). Influence within an organisation is reciprocal. Within the component of division of labour work tasks are broken down into specialities performed by individuals. These individuals are then dependant on others for the completion of the overall task. Even though people carry out individual tasks they rely on and influence others. This influence is not only amongst hierarchical equals in an organisation but between those with formal leadership roles and their subordinates. This relationship is reciprocal. A person within an organisation can emerge with influence due to task motivation and self confidence. They trigger change within an organisation from a state of equilibrium. As actions take place some people are going to be more influential than others – their actions have greater consequences than others. This can lead to a perception of influential people being more important than others.

I intend to explain some of the characteristics needed in order for teachers to have influence. I will use the recent research of Hobby et al (2005) where they endeavoured to identify a model of influence for teachers without authority. The research was carried out in eighteen schools identified hubs of communication through diaries of contacts kept by all teachers. These were analysed in order to identify teachers who connected the most with others. On this basis they identified these teachers as leaders in either a formal or informal capacity. Teachers were then issued with questionnaires in order to record what they felt were the key characteristics that made these leaders successful. The following characteristics of individuals were identified:

Thoughtful influence

No Boundaries

Trusted Channel

Listening first

Concern for impact

Tenacity

Humility

Enthusiasm

Groundwork

Spillane (2006) summarises these characteristics as:

Human Capital – Involves a person's knowledge, skills and expertise.

Cultural Capital – refers to a person's way of being and doing.

Social capital – refers to a person's social networks or connections but also concerns the prevalence of norms such as trust, collaboration, and a sense of obligation among individuals in an organisation. Both authors emphasise that people who have influence do not abuse their position, Hobby et al (2005) talk about banking and spending credibility and trust wisely. Although influence is an important aspect of adding value to distributed leadership when examining the individual characteristics there is a tendency to fall into the trap explained by Lakomski (2002) when he discusses the difficulty of identify distributed cognition. Spillane and Hobby have identified leadership practice as represented in the lists above. What they have not been able to do is to identify what makes the co – performances of these leaders add up to more than the individual parts. Spillane (2006) recounts a good description of this leadership in action when describing the interactions of four leaders influencing the literacy practice of teachers. It is clear that this is “leadership practice stretched over these leaders rather than simply being a function of their individual actions.” (Spillane, 2006) or concerted action (Gronn, 2003). However, the reasons are explained in leadership practice terms and as discussed earlier this overlooks the interpersonal characteristics that are needed to add value to distributed leadership. I have discussed the fact that having leadership capacity does not ensure that you will add value to distributed leadership. Lakomski (2002) states:

The accounts practitioners (which leaders?) are able to give on their understanding of their leadership practices are also cued by what they understand leadership to be. What they might observe as their own emerging task enactment is their a posteriori account of what they

think it is. And what they think it is depends on what kind of leadership framework they assume. (Lakomski, 2002, p. 25)

I think that this is the problem. Spillane (2006) has described where the value is added to distributed leadership, but because he and others in the field are bound by the traditional language and models of leadership as was embodied in the individual then what happens in the interactions between leaders has not been clarified. There is no language or model to describe it. The closest we come is in the brief description of friendship given by Gronn (2003) and also in the following set of components devised by Hobby et al (2005). Groups of connected teachers who have informal leaders within them are called hubs. A number of components which underpin the influence of these hubs are:

Integrity: 'I find them honest and transparent in their motivations and intentions.'

Utility: 'Our relationship is relevant to my concerns and interactions are tightly focussed on goals.'

Warmth: 'I enjoy our interactions and find them energising.'

Reciprocity: 'They are interested in my goals, as well as their own, and are genuinely helpful; there is something in this for us both'

Maintenance: 'I don't have to work too hard to keep them onside and they are interpersonally sensitive' (Hobby et al, 2005, p.33)

Maybe we should not be using terms like reciprocity, utility or integrity to describe the interactions and intuition needed for adding value to distributed leadership. I think the clues are in the quotations coupled with Gronn's (2003) notion of friendship. Maybe we should be looking for the qualities of enjoyment or pleasure, affection, care and personal stimulation coupled with leadership capacity in order to explain the conditions needed for value added distributed leadership to be achieved.

In this section I have tried to identify the interpersonal characteristics that are needed to make leadership practice add value to distributed leadership. Although reciprocal influence is a major aspect of ensuring all individuals whatever their position in school are able to take a lead, this is not enough. Spillane (2006) has given an example of successful leadership practice however I have not been able to discover any research that identifies what goes on in the interactions between leaders that mean that their actions add up to more than the sum of the parts. However, from experience I firmly believe that this is a phenomenon that does occur in teams of leaders.

Summary of the Theory of Distributed Leadership.

Distributed leadership describes leadership practice that emphasises the leadership activity rather than leadership of the individual. This means that it can be manifest in a variety of ways as described in the taxonomy of MacBeath (2005). It recognises formal leadership roles as well as informal and can be described as a spectrum of practice with formal delegation at one extreme and leadership practice embedded by right in all members of the school team at the other extreme. There are two aspects of distributed leadership, one as named by Spillane (2006) as “leader plus” recognises the leadership activity of individuals within the school. The other which is “leadership practice” (Spillane, 2006) or “concerted action” (Gronn, 2003) recognises that leadership can be carried out by groups of individuals. It is distinctive because it is leadership activity dependant on the interactions between leaders rather than the actions of individuals. It leads to leadership practice which is greater than the sum of its individual parts. This I have called value added distributed leadership. It is this aspect of distributed leadership that is unique distinguishing it from other forms of shared leadership. Distributed leadership is dependant on situation and leadership capacity in order for it to take place. Leaders need to have interpersonal characteristics of influence and intuition. However, it is not clear how interactions between leaders when taking part in leadership practice manifest themselves. Distributed leadership is therefore a framework to be used to identify the quality of leadership in school and also to help formal leaders to design the situation which will enable leadership practice to take place in schools.

Part 2. Distributed Leadership: An Idea Whose Time Has Come?

The notion of distributed leadership has become very popular in recent years. In order to discuss why this is I will separate this part into three sections. First I will describe the development over the last thirty years of leadership research and theory. Secondly I will look at the emergence of the idea of learning communities and the place distributed leadership has in schools that adopt this concept and finally I will look at the leadership needs of large primary schools.

Leadership Research and Theory.

I see 1989 as a key year in regard to the recognition of the importance of leadership in schools in order for school reform and improvement to take place. From this year major national reforms were implemented that changed the way schools are run and children are taught. Some of these reforms were the implementation of the national curriculum, local management of schools and the formation of the Office for Standards in Education. These reforms had major implications for the way schools were led. Before 1989 leadership in schools could be described as largely transactional. These were based on managerial systems that ensured the status quo. The term “loose coupling” used by Elmore (2000) describes the situation quite accurately although from the context of schools in the U.S.A. “Loose coupling” describes the relationship between classroom teachers and head teachers. Class teachers decided what should be taught in their classrooms and when, they decided on class groupings, assessment and all other aspects of teaching and learning. They also decided how learning should be evaluated. This means that the decisions about the key purposes of education were made in the individual classroom and not in the organisation that surrounded it. The purpose of management and leadership in this arrangement was to protect classroom instruction from outside inspection, interference and disruption. Although this description of Elmore’s (2000) is much generalised I can identify with it. In 1989 I had the job of training teachers to teach the new national curriculum. As well as being the victim regularly of open hostility by teachers I well remember the howls of indignation and anguish due to the fact that the government would presume to tell teachers what it was that they should teach in the classroom. There is a residue of that to this day. Some teachers still resent the fact that I as head teacher could go into class and observe them teaching.

However from 1989 the rate of change and reform demanded that schools were led differently. At this time Liethwood (1990) identified and promoted transformational leadership as a style that leaders needed in order to improve and change schools. Transformational leadership emphasised shared emotions and values within the school, fostering capacity development in order to obtain high levels of commitment to institutional goals on the part of colleagues. Over the next decade a number of other leadership styles were identified by researchers and theorists in the field. These focused on the personal characteristics of formal school leaders in order to achieve school goals. Some of these were explained by Liethwood (1999) and are listed below:

Instructional

Moral

Participative

Managerial

Postmodern

Interpersonal

It is clear that characteristics of all these styles of leadership are needed by school leaders in order to be successful.

*Artificial distinctions in that most successful leaders are likely to embody most or all of these approaches in their work.
(NCSL, 2002,p. 12).*

All this work until this time was focussed on the principle of head teacher as school leader. Research and theory emphasised the qualities and style of the leader. The reason for this was that researchers were clear about the effectiveness of school leadership to promote school improvement.

*The evidence from the international research base is unequivocal - effective leaders exercise an indirect but powerful influence on the effectiveness of the school and on the achievement of students.
(Liethwood & Jantzi, 2000, p.12).*

However at the turn of the century as Harris (2002) explains it was becoming clear that a lot of the research on individual leadership style did not reflect practice in schools. In association with this Fullan (2001) showed that the model of leadership concerned with the capabilities of one person was “severely limited in generating and sustaining classroom level change” (Fullan, 2001). This is true to an extent but there is also evidence in the research by Harris (2001) into improving schools in difficult circumstances that head teachers had characteristics of a transformational style of

leadership. In reality it would be hard to find an improving school that did not have a strong head teacher and in the majority of cases failing schools would have weaker head teachers. Although I am sure there are exceptions to this. The point here is that it became clear that formal leadership of the head teacher was important as a contributory factor to school improvement, but that the “heroic” (Gronn, 2000) nature of this leadership was not enough to explain school leadership and improvement. The importance of the leadership contribution of others in formal or informal positions in school began to be recognised. A formal recognition of this is that during school inspections the judgement of leadership goes beyond the head teacher to others in school with co-ordinating roles.

Various forms of shared leadership were identified and researched. Distributed leadership has come to the fore in the last two years because of its support by various influential organisations. The NCSL promotes distributed leadership for school improvement. The Primary Leadership Strategy uses it as the model for school leadership. As well as the historical reasons outlined above for this there is the pragmatic recognition that in school today the complexity of roles and demands made on leadership mean that it cannot reside in one person alone. However, there are dangers to this sudden promotion of an idea.

In proposing the distributed perspective developed here as an analytical tool, I am not offering it as the holy grail for addressing all that ails the field of educational leadership. (Spillane, 2006, p.104)

I have observed when attending conferences and training events that there is a sense that we should all be involved in distributed leadership. However, as explained earlier head teachers do not clearly perceive of what it is. I think that part of the reason for this is that we have been educated to think of leadership practice as residing in the individual, and the characteristics that make up successful practice. Distributed leadership focuses on leadership activity of which individuals take part. This is much more difficult to grasp than a list of characteristics of a leadership style. As I explained earlier the strength of distributed leadership lies in the notion that it is a framework for analysing and designing leadership in schools.

What then is the relationship between the head teachers’ leadership and distributed leadership? As Southworth (2004) explains good head teachers understand the schools

they work in – the context. I think that there is one leadership style catalogued by Liethwood (2001) which recognises this. This is contingent leadership.

The contingent model provides an alternative approach, recognising the diverse nature of school contexts and the advantages of adapting leadership styles to the particular situation rather than adopting a one size fits all stance. (NCSL, 2002, p. 11)

The head teacher has a contingent approach to his/her school when trying to understanding the context. He/she uses distributed leadership as the framework in which to analyse and design leadership practice in the school – the architect of leadership development (Southworth, 2004). The individual characteristics of leadership style which are recognised in the list above then are no longer the domain only of the head teacher but become the building blocks to increasing the individuals' capacity to take part in leadership practice. The head teacher then, in order to improve pupils learning has the crucial role of developing leadership capacity within a distributed leadership framework.

In the next section I will examine the value of distributed leadership in schools striving to become learning communities.

Learning Communities and Distributed Leadership.

In the context of continual school improvement the learning community model exemplifies what I believe gives children and other stakeholders high quality education. I will first briefly explain what I mean by a learning community. The major aspect of a learning centred community is the central position of the pupil as a learner. The assumption is made that if all adults in school are learners then it will have a beneficial effect on children (Senge, 2000). However, it is important that a structure to learning centred development in the classroom is created if it is going to be successful. Wise (2003) has adopted the accelerated learning cycle and characteristics of a learning environment as devised by Smith (1996). I, in turn have used this model with teachers as the basis for beginning the development of a common agreement and implementation of learning centred education. There are many models and recommendations for a learning centred approach for example the multiple intelligences approach devised by Gardner (1993). MacGilchrist, Myers and Reeds' Intelligent School (1997) and the approaches advocated by Hart, Dixon, Drummond & McIntyre (2004). There is little

research on the impact of a whole school learning centred approach on children. There are case studies of leading practitioners which are useful, for example Hart, Dixon, Drummond & McIntyre. (2004) but they are focussed on development for individual practitioners. The descriptions of re-engineering in school given by Wise (2003) and Barker (2003) are the most useful. However, Wise (2003) does not directly discuss impact on pupils and Barker (2003) judges impact by a steady improvement in Key Stage 2 Standard Assessment Task results. In fact most of the research for example that by Benson (2003), Kenning (2002), Andrews & Lewis (2002) is focussed on the beneficial effect on the teachers with an assumption that this means it is bound to have a positive impact on pupils. I would however argue that if the school is focussed on the learning of the pupil then it must lead to improvements in education.

Distributed leadership is key to the development of learning communities for the following reason. Crucial to learning communities is the empowerment of teachers to lead learning in the classroom. In order to do this they must demonstrate that they themselves are learners and that they have the capacity to lead. Leadership for the learning community has to be characterised by an empowerment to lead at all levels in the institution. Leaders need to know that in learning and improvement it is alright to make mistakes as part of the learning process. Roberts (2000) identifies a leader do right model in which teachers and the head are in agreement that the leader retains all control, never loses a confrontation, displays only positive feelings as negative feelings suggest a loss of control and stays rational at all times. Although this is an extreme position, in my experience there are individual team members and even heads who would judge the success of their leadership against these characteristics. Leadership needs to be distributed so that all staff are empowered to have influence (Gronn, 2000) when it is appropriate and to lead learning within the classroom environment. It is difficult to find research that supports the belief that teachers acting as leaders of learning in the classroom actually impacts on pupils learning. In fact research by Liethwood (2001) would suggest that distributed leadership can have a harmful effect on learning. However, I would argue that if in the process of becoming a learning community teachers become lead learners working with others to further improve the quality of education of children then it is bound to have a positive impact. Research by Cheng and Chueng (2004) in Hong Kong primary schools would support this. They found when comparing different types of school management with educational quality

that bottom level school management was most effective in improving teaching. This management was characterised by group and individual management at all levels in the school. I would argue that if teaching is improved by leadership then there is bound to be an impact on learning. In an earlier assignment I decided that in order to create learning communities the school needed:

1. A shared vision and understanding of the school as a system that needs realigning.
2. Well resourced and meaningful professional development that address the needs of the teacher in making pupils learning their central goal.
3. Distributed leadership that gives the community the capacity to shape its future.
4. A common understanding of what we are trying to achieve as in this case by using the Smith learning cycle (1996) as a model for learning.

I would argue that a distributed leadership framework would play a crucial role in helping to identify where the capacity for leadership practice needs developing. It would also enable leaders within school to design a framework that would ensure that teachers became lead learners in the classroom as well as in the school context. In turn teachers in classrooms would have a positive impact on the learning of children.

In the next section I intend to identify the importance of the contribution of a framework for distributed leadership in very large primary schools.

Distributed Leadership in Very Large Primary Schools.

My reason for having an interest in very large primary schools is because for five years I was the head teacher of one. I found that because there are so few of them and they are so much larger than the average primary school that if you seek advice and support in leadership you are limited because there are not many people around who have the experience to support you. Schools of this size are similar to small secondary schools, however, although a distributed leadership framework is appropriate to both types of schools it will be different in each because of the variation in context. For example, secondary schools would distribute leadership to subject departments whereas a primary school is more likely to distribute leadership to teachers on the basis of pupil age or key

stage responsibility. As head teacher then there are few models of successful leadership in the context I was working in to learn from.

I would first like to define very large primary schools. The OfSTED performance and assessment report (2005) defines very large primary schools as those with over 573 pupils. Southwood (2004) defines very large primary schools as those with over 601 pupils. These schools would be characterised as being at least three form entry (admitting ninety pupils per year). In 2001 there were 148 of these schools in the country. However the number is growing as the drive to amalgamate schools continues in order to make best use of resources and in 2006 there were 277 of them. The average size of a primary school in this country is approximately 240 children. Systems for leading schools of that size can be very different to leading schools of over 600 children. As Southworth (2004) states:

The upsurge in larger schools means that although they are increasing in number we know relatively little about leading and managing them. They are a relatively new phenomenon and as such have been little examined. (Southwood, 2004, p.12)

I would support this statement. In my search for research in leadership in very large primary schools all I have been able to find is the work of Wallace (1999) who was examining senior management teams in schools of more than 300 pupils. The research into management teams arose in the nineties based on the awareness and recognition that leadership needed to be shared amongst a group of leaders due to the increasing demands of headship. A major research project was carried out by Southworth (2004) examining leadership in primary schools of all sizes. He interviewed heads and deputies in approximately a third of the largest primary schools in England and sent questionnaires to the rest. One key objective was effective leadership. The research did not address distributed leadership in any detail and as discussed earlier in the assignment gave a limited definition of what it was. A key point that Southworth (2004) makes is that leadership research has largely been focussed on the individual rather than the context of the school. This is a point already discussed in this part of the review. It is this very large primary school context that the need for a distributed leadership framework is evident. Southworth (2004) enabled me to identify a key reason for the need for a distributed leadership framework in this context. In all primary schools the head teacher as recognised by many researchers, for example Liethwood (2001) has a

secondary impact on the quality of teaching and learning. This is because he/she relies on other teachers to do this work. In very large primary schools the effect of the head teacher is even more diluted. For example, when carrying out classroom observations as a head of a smaller school with twelve classes I could manage to see all teachers every half term. With twenty five teachers I was lucky if I observed them once a term. Southworth (2004) has suggested that the ratio of formal leadership to followers in order to improve instruction is approximately one leader to four followers. However, as he states this is not backed up by research. I can identify with this as I have developed a leadership structure with leaders being responsible for six teachers and teaching assistants basically recognising that it is impossible for me to do this improvement work single handed. What ever the ratio of leaders to teachers however and whatever the structure used the key point is that as head teacher I have to ensure that although my impact on learning is secondary the links I have with the classroom are as effective as possible. A distributed leadership framework gives me the opportunity to do this.

In the next section I will combine the theory of distributed leadership with the contexts outlined in this part of the review. I will then highlight my key research questions based on this summary.

Summary of distributed leadership theory and contexts for practice.

I have identified that within very large primary schools that aspire to being learning communities a distributed leadership framework is an appropriate means of defining present practice and designing future leadership structures to enable school improvement. To do this the head teacher needs to adopt a contingent approach to best match the distributed leadership framework to the needs of the context. In order to increase leadership practice capacity amongst individuals he/she would develop leadership characteristics and styles amongst others. The framework would have aspects of leader plus and leader practice (Spillane, 2006), or numerical multiple actions and concertive action (Gronn, 2003). Leaders would carry out practice individually as well as in groups. The skill for the head teacher is in creating the conditions when groups of leaders work together for value added distributed leadership to occur. This however is the area least understood.

Having completed this critical review into distributed leadership my research will be focussed on the following questions:

- Is it possible to identify the interactions that take place in leadership practice that lead to value added distributed leadership?
- Are the interpersonal characteristics of influence and intuition an important contributory aspect to successful distributed leadership?
- How does situation effect distributed leadership?
- Do head teachers take a contingent stance when leading?
- How do schools increase leadership capacity?

By answering these questions it will be possible to identify a model for distributed leadership in large primary schools that aspire to be learning communities.

Chapter Two

Research Methodology.

The literature review identifies a series of questions about distributed leadership. These questions can be grouped into two categories as follows:

1. Organisational support for Distributed leadership.
 - How does situation effect distributed leadership?
 - Do head teachers take a contingent stance when leading?
 - How do schools increase leadership capacity?
2. Value Added Distributed Leadership. The characteristics and behaviour of leaders.
 - Is it possible to identify the interactions that take place in leadership practice that lead to value added distributed leadership?
 - Are the interpersonal characteristics of influence and intuition an important contributory aspect to successful distributed leadership?

The second area is of greater value in identifying a distinct concept of distributed leadership as explained earlier. However, it is important to understand the context in which value added distributed leadership occurs which means that the information gathered in group 1 would be complimentary to the group 2 information.

In order to research the answers to these questions I am going to adopt a qualitative approach which I will explain below.

Reasons for using a Qualitative Research Approach.

In terms of the relationship between theory and research the study will be inductive. This means that the research data and findings will identify concepts to explain distributed leadership and categories to help in understanding them. A qualitative method will allow me the best opportunity to search for the unidentified characteristics in this unexplored area. The alternative to this would be a deductive study. In order to do this I would need to have identified a theory and hypothesis for value added

distributed leadership which I could test through research. Although my critical review has given me a clearer understanding of the subject my research will be essentially exploratory. I am not able to present a theory or hypothesis, only raise questions that through an inductive study would lead to a model to explain the concept of value added distributed leadership. This approach also allows me to take an iterative stance, as Bryman (2004) states “it involves a weaving back and forth between data and theory”.

The research will need to generate data based on the participants’ interpretation of behaviour and interactions. This means that the epistemological position known as positivism is not appropriate. This is because I will not be able to apply methods used in natural science to this study. The approach I will be using is interpretivism. This allows for a distinction between the study of the social sciences and the natural sciences and accepts that there will be subjective interpretation to data on social action. An example of this type of research is that carried out by Storey (2004) in which she examines distributed leadership in a secondary school. In order to carry out the research she interviewed all the science faculty members at least twice over an eighteen month period. This approach meant that she was able to collect rich data that added to her understanding of the dynamics of the effect of this leadership style in this school. A quantitative study would not have given her the understanding of the school’s internal social dynamics as interpreted by its participants.

The literature review has already identified activity theory as a means to identify human behaviour as it interacts with the world. Therefore the ontological position I have to take is constructionist. I highlighted when discussing activity theory that social phenomena and categories can be changed and revised over time by the interaction of social actors, (Bryman, 2004), when describing improvements in the provision for children’s writing. Objectivism suggests that social phenomena and categories used in daily life are independent from people. This is a quantitative stance that would be unhelpful in this research.

Although I have identified that this research is going to be qualitative because it will be inductive, it will interpret the data and will be based on a constructionist understanding of the relationship between people and social phenomena it would be artificial to discount some research activity that could be categorised as quantitative in this study.

Bryman (2004) warns of the danger of exaggerating the differences between qualitative and quantitative research. He also states that research methods are more autonomous to epistemological commitments than is often appreciated. This means that certain methods are associated with a particular type of research. However, there are examples where research methods are used as and when they are judged appropriate rather than because of their association to a research type. An example of research that mixes quantitative research methods with the qualitative characteristic of induction is that carried out by Cheng & Cheung (2004). In this research they take the concept of school management and try to categorize style to quality of education. They do this by issuing self completion questionnaires to over 2000 teachers in 68 schools which represents 7.5% of the teacher population. Teachers had to answer questions about indicators of success using a Likeart scale. From this research Cheng and Cheung were able to categorize four styles of school management that emerged from the questions. The point here is that they did not start out with any theory or hypothesis but had concepts and questions that they wanted to explore and used quantitative research in order to carry out the study.

Gubrium and Holstein (1997) identify four traditions of qualitative research. These are Naturalism, Ethnomethodology, Emotionalism and Postmodernism. The research carried out here will be largely naturalistic in orientation – “Naturalism is the philosophical view that strives to remain true to the nature of the phenomena under investigation.” (Matza, 1969). This definition of naturalism draws on elements of interpretivist epistemology and constructionist ontology (Bryman, 2004). The research is concerned with an understanding of human behaviour rather than an explanation of it. This is based on a belief that the phenomena being researched can be influenced by the social players involved. So distributed leadership is dependant on the social players in school and is not independent of them. It is also strongly influenced by the researchers’ specific version of reality. The research will try to identify and understand the reality of distributed leadership generated by the rich data collected through semi – structured interviews, team observations and focus group interviews. The following two examples of research illustrate how reality is influenced by the researcher: Kelly (2002) could be perceived to be biased to the head teacher view of how it is. In her study of shared leadership teams she carries out a semi – structured interview with head teachers in the schools she is studying. She does do some triangulation work by observing a leadership

team meeting in each school followed by a group discussion to clarify what she has seen as well as having access to school documentation. However, none of the other teachers have the opportunity to give an interpretation of how leadership works in the school which I think is bound to give bias to research findings. Storey (2004) purposefully does not interview the head teacher for her study for the reason just stated. However I feel that this weakens the validity of the research as a reliable cross section of participants would need to be involved in any study to collect a rich data base for analysis that was valid and reliable. It is therefore important when interpreting research to realise that if the researcher is giving a version of social reality that there is validity and reliability.

I now intend to describe the purpose, method and data analysis of the semi-structured interviews, team observations and focus groups interviews. I will also discuss issues of validity and reliability when explaining the criteria used to identify schools for research purposes.

Selecting the Sample.

In order to select the sample of schools a form of non – probability sampling was used. When carrying out the research on distributed leadership very large primary schools had to be identified. Southworth (2004) after statistical analysis of primary school size in England defines very large primary schools as those with over 600 pupils. The reasons for adopting this definition and the purpose in focussing on very large primary schools are explained in the literature review. After contacting the DFE marketing division a list of all the schools in the country that met this criterion was obtained (at a cost of £90!). There are 277 primary schools that can be defined as very large.

The second and third criteria were related. It was important to select schools that were judged to have outstanding leadership (OfSTED, 2005). The reasons for this were to identify contexts where distributed leadership is successful and to give the best opportunity to identify the concept of value added distributed leadership. This was considered by the researcher to be most likely to happen in schools where leadership is judged to be outstanding. It is also important that the judgements are up to date. For example if the judgement in leadership was made in 2001 a number of variables could affect the quality of leadership in the intervening five years. Therefore the second criterion was very large primary schools that had an OfSTED inspection since January

2005. The third criterion was very large primary schools where leadership was judged to be outstanding. This left me with a list of 6 schools.

The fourth criterion was to select schools that would not be influenced by the researchers work as an HMI. My division is the East Midlands. None of the six schools identified are in that division.

From this list of schools I decided that I need three to take part in the research. The very nature of this qualitative research means that it will not be generalisable therefore the size of the sample does not have to be exhaustive, but within the capabilities of the researcher. Although this is a non – probability sample it does not match the categories of this type of sample identified by Bryman (2004). These are; convenience sampling, snowball sampling and quota sampling. Convenience and snowball sampling are often used in qualitative research, however I would say that of the three, quota sampling most closely matches the process I have gone through to select my sample. The use of quota sampling is however most often used in quantitative market research when using structured questionnaires so although the process of selecting a quota is similar the application is completely different. Once the quota was selected the researcher decided on the three schools based on convenience. The three that were nearest to the researchers' home were selected.

In order to gain an understanding of the context for distributed leadership the researcher carried out a semi – structured interview with the head teacher of the school, these were recorded. These interviews were used to identify concepts explaining the context in which distributive leadership is successful (section 1 questions). This was followed up with an observation of a team meeting which the head teacher identifies as exhibiting successful leadership practice. These meetings involved the head teacher. Although there is a danger that the authority of the head teacher can undermine leadership practise as manifest in others, the reality in these schools was that leadership meetings involved them. Therefore to exclude head teachers would distort reality. An accurate balance between leadership practice and leadership as manifest in the individual would be observable. These observations were recorded and filmed in order to analyse behaviour as well as verbal interactions. The analysis was influenced by discourse analysis methods. The teams were then interviewed as a focus group in order to give

understanding to the observed interactions. The focus groups were also filmed as well as recorded for the reason given above. The head teacher was not involved in the focus group interviews. The researcher came to an agreement with each head teacher that their presence might influence the response of other participants. The meetings and focus interviews were used to identify concepts to explain the section 2 questions identified above.

Validity and reliability

A problem with this research is the small sample of schools being used in order to try and make findings valid and reliable. Subjective meaning is being created in a constructionist transactional cultural context. Criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) are an appropriate way of evaluating validity and reliability in this qualitative research. The two key criteria are trustworthiness and authenticity. Trustworthiness is made up of four criteria; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility of the research allows the findings of the research to be given to those participating to see if it is true (respondent validation). The researcher was able to do this with the schools involved. Transcripts and research analysis were sent to the schools for comment. To date there have been no replies. The researcher assumes that because of this the schools involved had no argument with the truth of the transcripts. There was an element of triangulation in this research. Although the opinion of the head teacher on the context for distributed leadership in school was the main source of information used. The observations and focus group interviews were used as a means of asserting the credibility of the head teacher semi – structured interviews. Transferability allows others to judge the transferability of this research based on the depth of understanding of the uniqueness of this particular setting. The empirical issue of transferability is not at issue (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Geertz (1973) would encourage me to give a thick description of the culture being researched in order to meet this criterion. This I can do because of the range of research techniques to be used. Although it can be argued that the findings are only relevant to the schools researched I hope that the concepts associated with distributed leadership abstracted from this research will be transferable. Dependability is a weakness as it involves an audit of research data by other researchers. There will be an element of this however in the judgement of this thesis. Also a full record of the research process is available for scrutiny. Finally confirmability recognises that this type of research cannot be objective,

but by its nature is subjective. This research is based on my understanding of the subject. It is impossible to separate my beliefs and values about leadership from this research. My understanding will inform the identification of concepts and their categories. However, the research would need to show that it was carried out in good faith and that my personal values do not sway the research. Again the marking of this thesis will go some way to allow some external audit of this criterion.

The criteria for authenticity are as follows:

Fairness - This is concerned with whether the research fairly represents different viewpoints within the setting. It could be argued that focussing on the opinion of the head teacher by only interviewing this person on their own is not fair. However, the purpose of these interviews was to give the context in the school for distributed leadership and interviewing the head teacher was the most likely and efficient way of getting this information. The focus interviews allowed all participants to give their viewpoints which triangulated with the views of the head teachers. .

Ontological authenticity – “Does the research help members to arrive at a better understanding of their social milieu?” (Bryman, 2004, p.276). This research will help those participants and others to better understand the dynamics in the school. In return for allowing the research a workshop or staff meeting focussing on distributed leadership has been offered by the researcher.

Educative authenticity – I think that the focus group interviews and workshops offered will help to give teachers a better understanding of leadership practice in their school.

Catalytic authenticity – “Has the research acted as an impetus to members to engage in action to change their circumstances?” (Bryman, 2004, p.276)

Tactical Authenticity – “Has the research empowered members to take the steps necessary for engaging in action?” (Bryman, 2004, p.276). It will be difficult to assess whether dissemination leads to change for those involved in the research schools. Or that teachers will feel empowered to take action to change their circumstances. It is hoped that it will lead to a better understanding of leadership practice in the schools involved.

The criteria for authenticity for researchers have not been influential. This is because of their affinity with action research which has not been a popular form of social research, (Bryman, 2004). They are deemed useful here because of the emphasis on practical outcomes. Many schools are involved in action research as a means of developing

pedagogy. It can be argued that any conclusions reached about leadership are bound to affect the researchers' work as HMI and would inform the schools involved about leadership practice.

The criteria of trustworthiness and authenticity as described above will be used to evaluate the reliability and validity of this research.

Research Techniques

Three research techniques were used in this research. These were semi – structured interviews, analysis of observations and focus group interviews (made up of participants in the observation).

In order to explain the three research techniques the process will be described using the steps outlined by Bryman (2004) as headings. These are:

- General research questions.
- Collection of relevant data
- Interpretation of data.
- Conceptual and theoretical work.

These steps will be used in the following three sections:

- Semi –structured interviews
- Observation analysis
- Focus group interviews.

Semi – structured interviews.

As explained above the first part of the research will be a semi-structured interview with the head teacher which will give a rich personal insight into the context for distributed leadership in the school. This will identify concepts of leadership which may be transferable.

- General research questions.

All the questions arise from the literature review. In order to carry out semi – structured interviews the recommendations given by Bryman (2004) were used to construct an interview guide. Topics have been identified from section 1 questions which the researcher thinks contribute to successful distributed leadership. Questions then were formulated in order to gain the interviewees perspective on those topics. When designing the guide consideration was given to the order and flow of questions as well

as ensuring that they were relevant to the research, were not leading and were comprehensible to the interviewee (Bryman, 2004). I was also very aware that this was a guide and should not be rigidly adhered to during the interview.

- Collection of relevant data.

Semi – structured interviews were selected for the following reason. The focus was fairly clear. This meant that the interviewer had the confidence to be able to direct the questions in order to gain the information required about the topics. A more structured interview would not have given this flexibility. When interviewing, the researcher was aware of the following two issues. Firstly the range of skills necessary in order to interview. The list given by Bryman (2004) which are adapted from the list proposed by Kvale (1996) was used.

- Knowledgeable – thoroughly familiar with the focus of the interview.
- Structuring – gives the interview purpose and direction.
- Clear – simple, easy questions without jargon.
- Gentle – Allows interviewees time to answer and consider questions.
- Sensitive – is empathetic to the interviewee.
- Open – flexible and responsive to the interviewee.
- Steering – directs the interview in order to find out what the interviewer wants.
- Critical – prepared to challenge inconsistencies in answers.
- Remembering – relates responses to past answers.
- Interpreting – clarifies statements without influencing them.
- Balance – interviewer gauges how much he or she needs to say.
- Ethically sensitive – sensitive to confidentiality, ethical dimensions of the interview.

Secondly the range of questions types that needed to be used in order to elicit responses from interviewees was taken into account (Bryman, 2004). This range of questions is closely associated to the skills listed above. I will explain their associations under the question type headings.

- Introducing – These questions introduce a topic and can be seen to be associated with the structure and steering of an interview. The interviewer needs to assess

when he or she has enough knowledge about an issue so that the next introducing question can be used.

- Follow-up – The purpose of these questions is to elaborate on an answer previously given. They can be associated with steering of the interview to gain the information needed and the openness giving the flexibility to follow up a question. This encapsulates one of the main differences between semi-structured interviews and structured interviews.
- Probing – This category is similar to the previous one in that more information is being elicited from the interviewee. It could also be associated with clarification.
- Specifying – This is also associated to follow – up questions. The purpose of these questions is to give clarity to answers.
- Direct – These questions can be quite challenging and are best used when the relationship with the interviewee is established. This associates them with the need for sensitivity and empathy with the interviewee.
- Indirect – These tend to allow the interviewee to interpret the views of others rather than themselves and are therefore useful in eliciting information in a sensitive situation.
- Structuring – These are associated with the interviewers' skill in structuring, steering and balancing the interview.
- Silence – Closely associated with gentleness. Allowing interviewees the time to consider and articulate their answers.
- Interpreting – Another form of follow up question which allows the interviewer to interpret answers. It may also allow critical challenge to answers based on remembering.

In designing and asking questions the researcher was aware of one of the disadvantages of this type of interviewing as listed by Cohen, Manion, Morrison (2000). The researcher would be particularly susceptible to certain kinds of bias. This is because of a thorough knowledge and understanding of this subject. It is important that the researchers' views and opinions do not influence the interviewees' answers.

Interviews were recorded on a digital recorder compatible with the researchers' computer. Interviews were then transcribed for analysis. Cohen, Manion, Morrison (2000) list one of the disadvantages of this type of interview as being "time-consuming,

both to administer and process.” This was found to be the case. However, the value of transcription was that a thorough understanding of the details of the interview were gained by the researcher.

- Interpretation of data.

The strategy used to analyse interviews was grounded theory. The alternative is analytical deduction. This would have been inappropriate because of the need to continue research until all deviant or inconsistent cases are excluded. This research is only based on three schools. An iterative approach to the data was taken which means that after the first interview it was analysed in order to identify concepts and an emerging theory which was pursued in the following interview. I am inclined to agree with the criticism of grounded theory made by Bulmer (1979) when he questions whether researchers can suspend their awareness of theories or concepts until analysis of data. I know because of my interest theoretically and practically in the issue being researched that it is virtually impossible not to interpret the data before analysis is complete. It is important therefore to ensure that the research has confirmability. Bryman (2004) doubts whether grounded theory actually generates theory. He acknowledges that it is a rigorous means to generate concepts but it is difficult to see what explanations for concepts can be arrived at. I agree to some extent with this. The concepts and model identified in this research I believe could be replicated in other institutions, however the theory or explanation as to how they have developed is only relevant to the research schools and could not be replicated in other schools.

Coding was used to break down an interview into different parts and realign it into categories and concepts. Strauss and Corbin (1990) identify three types of coding. Open coding which is the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing to yield concepts that turn into categories. Axial coding which is data put back together in new ways after open coding, then making connections between categories. Finally selective coding which is the procedure of selecting the core category or concept and systematically relating it to other categories. A core category is the central issue or focus around which all other categories are integrated. There is some criticism of these categories especially of axial coding because it can close down an analysis not allowing the state of flux that is a key part of this type of coding (Bryman, 2004). Although it is not necessary to use all three types of coding, in fact Charmaz (2004) - distinguishes between two phases - open or initial and selective or focused. Open very detailed - leading to focus emphasizing the most common codes. The process

used in this research was to use open coding to analyse the transcripts. Axial coding was then used to categorise the codes grouping the data under category headings and finally selective coding was used to group related categories thus identifying the key concepts which explained the phenomena.

- Conceptual and theoretical work.

The outcomes of this research are in terms of concepts and categories of concepts and some substantive theory in the form of a model of distributed leadership in order to explain the concepts identified. A concept is the label for discrete phenomena identified as part of the grounded theory analysis (Bryman, 2004). Within the concepts identified are categories of behaviour that add up to create the phenomena.

Observation Analysis.

- General research questions.

Observation of team meetings were used in order to try to answer the section two questions that are about creating an understanding of value added distributed leadership. These were concerned with the interactions between the participants in leadership practice. For this a normal team meeting that was regularly held in school and could be recommended by the head teacher as an example that appears to meet the description of leadership practice as described in the literature review was observed. I have adopted the lead given by Spillane (2006) when he describes a literacy co-ordinators meeting as an example of distributed leadership that is greater than the sum of its individual parts. Unfortunately although the interview is valid Spillane (2006) does not explore why the interactions between participants give it this characteristic. Probably because the research tools he had available did not allow for this.

- Collection of relevant data

The participant teams were observed and filmed. The researcher was present during this meeting for the following reasons. The camera could only be pointed in one direction in a team meeting. The researcher wanted to observe the non-verbal as well as verbal interactions between participants and therefore needed to position himself so that he could see interactions that would not be recorded on film. The researcher was aware that reliability could be affected due to researcher inconsistency or fatigue if present to observe the meeting (Bryman, 2004). Also as Bryman (2004) states the presence of the researcher in the room may lead to the effect of “social desirability”. Participants alter

behaviour to meet the needs of what they perceive the researcher to want. It could be argued that the same effect could be created with the video camera alone. In reality the researcher found that after the first five minutes participants appeared to accept the intrusion and carried out the meetings as though he wasn't there. As a safety measure there was a separate audio recording of speech made in the interview.

- Interpretation of data.

Observations were analysed using a non-participant unstructured observation technique (Bryman, 2004). This was because the researcher was not involved in the behaviour and the aim was to record as much of the detail as possible in order to create a narrative account. A structured observation technique would have created too rigid a framework to allow the researcher to do this as it would be based on coding of anticipated behaviour. The researcher did not know how the interactions would manifest themselves. This was informed by discourse analysis to aid in the understanding of the verbal communication. Discourse analysis was identified as a useful method in this research for the following reason. The interactions were characterised by a mixture of verbal and non - verbal communications and therefore a technique was needed to compliment the observations which examined the language of participants in order to reach understandings about how thoughts, emotions and ideas are played out in action (Potter and Wetherall, 1995).

Potter and Wetherall list six principles of discourse analysis. These are:

1. Practices and resources.

This examines how people use narrative as a tool to allow them to draw on resources like category systems, narrative characters and interpretive repertoires in order to contribute to understanding of issues of identity, nature of mind, constructs of self, other and the world, social action and interaction.

2. Construction and Description

Discourse is constructed to perform social actions. It examines how people assemble versions of the world in their interactions.

Methods of description - versions become established as solid, real and independent of the speaker.

3. Content

Discourse analysis treats the language as where the understanding is and does not look for underlying cognition.

4. Rhetoric

Rhetorical analysis is useful in highlighting the way people's versions of actions, features of the world or their own mental life are designed to counter real or potential alternatives.

5. Stake and Accountability

This is brought about due to conflicting elements of social life.

People treat each other and collectives as agents who have a stake or interest in their actions. Their accountability to this depends on their interest or the feeling of relationship with the stakeholder.

6. Cognition in Action.

Looks at how mental life, thoughts, ideas and emotions are played out in action.

This principle takes up an anti-cognitivist approach. By careful analysis of the language you should be able to infer an understanding of the reasons for language and action without looking for underlying cognition and reasons for such action.

As Potter and Wetherall (1995) point out you would not expect all principles to be identified in any single piece of research. Principles that relate closely to this research are those of:

2. Construction and description.

An example from the observations would be that the head teacher makes the following comment when discussing the use of computers at home.

HT "And how much of that is used for playing?"

IT "Well exactly." (Apple)

The head teacher here has constructed a reality based on his perception that children use their computers to play games rather than to do their homework. He has no evidence for this, nor has the other speaker but between them they have agreed that it is a truism.

5. Stake and Accountability.

These team meetings were based around all participants having an interest and reliance on the actions of other members. This is crucial to leadership practice.

6. Cognition in action.

The researcher is neither skilled nor interested in looking for underlying cognition. The purpose of the research is to identify from the language the behavioural traits in interactions that are present when leadership practice takes place.

In order to analyse the observations, parts of the meeting were transcribed rather than the whole meeting. Bryman (2004) points out that discourse analysis gives a greater flexibility to focus in on relevant pieces of the observation which would contrast to a structured interview transcript for example. As O'Connell and Kowal (1995) state "The transcript should reflect the particular interests of the researcher". The parts that were transcribed were those that were judged to give examples of leadership practice rather than leadership plus which would be based on individuals. There are many systems for coding transcriptions in discourse analysis, for example Jefferson (1984), however these are highly complicated. The coding used had to account for behaviour as well as verbal interaction. The same method of coding was used as was explained when discussing the semi-structured interviews. For this research the combination of using the transcript and watching the video helped to ensure that the coding system used to examine interactions was valid and reliable in terms of trustworthiness and authenticity.

- Conceptual and theoretical work.

The outcomes of this aspect of the research are in terms of concepts and categories of concepts that identify behaviour that takes place when distributed practice is apparent. These concepts contribute to the model that describes distributed leadership in these schools.

Focus group interviews.

- General research questions.

The purpose of these interviews was to triangulate the other aspects of the research. The reason for doing them was as highlighted by Bryman (2004) when explaining criticisms of structured observation to try and further examine meanings and intentions behind behaviour and language. The interviews were necessary in answering the section two questions about leadership practice. More information about interactions and behaviour was gathered. However, more important than this were the characteristics of individuals and their meetings as well as the benefits participants gained from leadership which were identified during these interviews.

- Collection of relevant data

Participants in the focus interview were those who took part in the team meeting.

The focus group technique is one that is used widely for commercial and market research reasons. The format and rules were adopted to ensure reliability and validity. However, its purpose is completely different. This research has the following aspects in common with focus group research; the focus group has a specific theme and the research was concerned with the way participants discuss the theme as a group. As Bryman (2004) states the focused interview presents a more naturalistic account of the participants. Another advantage over individual interviews is that participants can challenge perceived views and develop clarity in thinking through discussion.

The researcher was mindful of some of the disadvantages of this research technique. These are:

The researcher can have less control over proceedings.

Participants may express culturally accepted views rather than personal views.

The make up of the groups was between four and eight. The norm for this type of research is groups ranging from six to twelve people (Bryman, 2004). However, it is recognised that small groups of people are valid when they have high participation in the issue which was the case in this research. Also the number of groups was not the norm for this type of research. There are three participating schools so there will be three groups. It is normal to have between eight and fifty two groups, (Bryman, 2004). Calder (1977) states that “when the moderator reaches the point that he or she is able to anticipate fairly accurately what the group is going to say, then there are probably enough groups already.” When discussing reliability and validity it has been explained that this research will not get to this point. Focus group research is normally used for commercial purposes. Groups tend to be stratified to demographic criteria which would mean many groups. This is not relevant to this research.

The interview schedule covered areas related by the researcher to the questions identified in the literary review. However, it is important in focus group research to allow participants to discuss areas of perceived importance for them. The researcher had to draw a fine line between over structure and losing control to the participants. Bryman’s (2004) rule is the more topics to cover, the more structured the schedule needs to be. I limited the topics to five. All the rules for asking questions as explained earlier were adopted here. In normal focus group interviews the following ground rules would be in place; no impolite interruptions, interviewer maintained control of the

discussion. This was not appropriate in these interviews because the participants were used to meeting on a weekly basis at least so they had their own subliminal rules. One of the characteristics of their interactions was interruption. To have imposed these rules would have meant losing some rich information.

- Interpretation of data.

The interviews were filmed as well as recorded for the reasons given when explaining the meeting observations. Full transcriptions were then made of the interviews.

Coding systems explained earlier were used to analyse this data. Transcription was much more difficult for the following reasons:

The number of participants.

The tendency to interrupt each other.

The behaviour that took place amongst participants when another was speaking

Participants who spoke when another was speaking.

This was also the case when transcribing the meetings. However it was important to ensure that analysis took all this activity into account as the advantage of the focus group interviews was that more was learnt from the interactions of participants than would have been gained if participants had been interviewed alone. This is identified by Bryman (2004) as a key reason for using this research technique.

- Conceptual and theoretical work.

Concepts about individual leaders, their methods of working and the benefits they derived from leadership were identified which add to the model of distributed leadership in these schools. They provide a crucial link between the environment for distributed leadership and the behaviours manifest in leadership practice.

Research organisation

Throughout the thesis the three schools that took part in the research will be referred to as Pear, Plum and Apple. All names have been changed to preserve the anonymity of participants. The research took place on the following three days:

29 January 2007 – Pear Junior School

6 February 2007 – Plum Primary School

27 February 2007 – Apple Primary School

The research day in each school began with the head teacher semi – structured interview. This was followed by the leadership team meeting observation (dates were selected that fitted in with the schools regular leadership meeting pattern). Finally, following the observation the focus group interview took place. The three research techniques used were successful in enabling the researcher to identify concepts to describe the context, characteristics and behaviours of distributed leadership. These will be described in detail in the next section which analyses the research findings.

Chapter three.

Research Findings and Analysis.

I intend to structure this section of the thesis in the following way:

1. In order to provide a context to the research a description of the schools that were involved will be given.
2. An analysis of the head teacher interviews will identify key concepts in the leader plus aspects of distributed leadership associated with the following research questions identified.

Organisational support for Distributed leadership.

- How does situation effect distributed leadership?
 - Do head teachers take a contingent stance when leading?
 - How do schools increase leadership capacity?
3. An analysis of the focus group interviews will help to triangulate the findings from the head teacher interviews and to identify concepts that may be involved in the leadership practice aspects of distributed leadership associated with the following identified research questions.

Value Added Distributed Leadership. The characteristics and behaviour of leaders.

- Is it possible to identify the interactions that take place in leadership practice that lead to value added distributed leadership?
 - Are the interpersonal characteristics of influence and intuition an important contributory aspect to successful distributed leadership?
4. An analysis of the leadership meeting observations will help to triangulate the concepts identified in the focus group and head teacher interviews. Analysis of the interviews will examine the behaviours associated with leadership interactions which would suggest that value added distributed leadership as explained earlier is taking place.

Research Format.

To assist the reader in finding their way through this research I have used the following structure:

Research is broken into the following four sections:

1. Description of research schools.

2. Analysis of the semi-structured interviews with the head teachers.
3. Analysis of the semi – structured leadership team focus group interviews.
4. Analysis of the leadership meetings.

Sections 2 to 4 begin and end with a diagram summary of the concepts and categories of concepts that are to be identified in the section.

1. Descriptions of Research Schools.

As explained in the methodology section of the thesis three schools were selected from a shortlist of six that matched the criteria. The final selection of three schools was a convenience sample based on the distance from the researcher's home.

In order to understand how schools organise their leadership teams the reader needs to understand the following changes to teachers pay and conditions which came into force in September 2005. Head teachers, deputy head teachers and assistant head teachers are paid on the leadership pay scale. Teachers who take on additional responsibilities, but are not on the leadership scale are given teaching and learning responsibility payments (TLR). These vary in value; TLR 1 payments are for those with most responsibility, TLR 2 payments are for teachers with a smaller management responsibility. All schools had to devise a staffing structure to be fully implemented by September 2008. At the time of writing schools are at various stages of the implementation of their final structure.

It was very clear in these three schools that an element in their success was that they were passionate about learning for all. Parents, staff and pupils were all involved in learning and the learning community was intrinsic to the ethos of these schools.

Or if there's heavy training, I say heavy. Involving everybody in the school. Citizenship, that's everybody, and the whole staff is involved in issues like that training, One glorious session we had with cooks, bottle washers, everybody, you wouldn't have known from the dialogue who was who in the workshop. The staff asked for more of those where everybody was together. We involved every member of staff - Cleaners, cooks, teachers, some parents. (Plum)

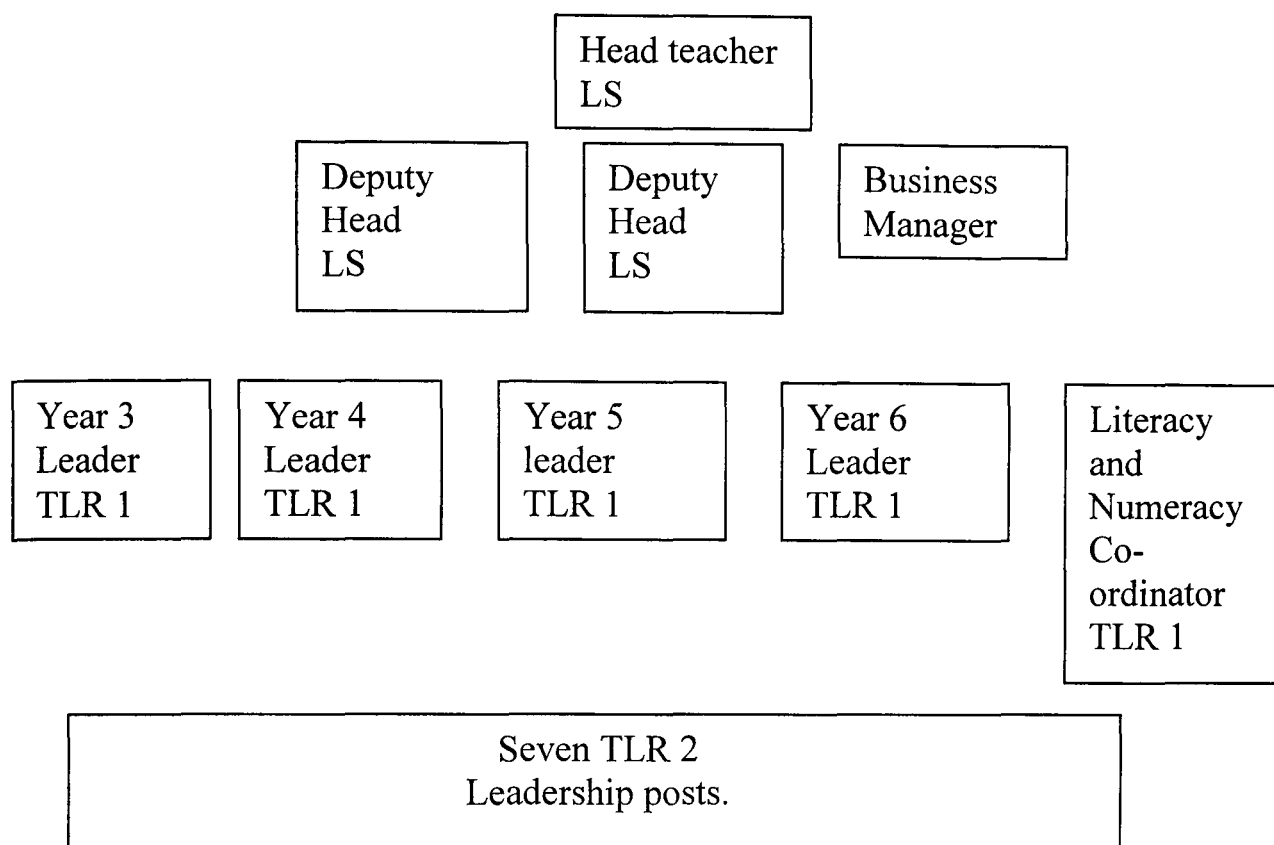
Huge, do you know why, we empower pupils, the culture is bottom up as well as top down. These kids have got so much confidence, uhm, when I talk about empowerment it goes right through into the classroom as well. They're independent children, independent minds, we encourage them to go off and research, to investigate, to explore,

make their own decisions. They run the radio station, they provide the formatting for the TV screen, they produce their own DVDs. We give total, directed empowerment to these youngsters, and that illustrates itself most important on the impact on learning. And that's unrestricted. They want to go in their own direction to research something they will have the facility and the capacity to do that. And it goes beyond the school day as well, because they can access their learning on their worksite. We are in strong negotiations over a learning platform at the moment. Through the empowerment we've given, this distributed leadership goes right to the children. (Apple)

A brief description of each school is given below.

Pear School.

Pear School has approximately six hundred and twenty pupils aged between seven and eleven years old. Prior to September 2005 it was a middle school. Most pupils are of white British heritage. Their home circumstances are generally more advantaged than those of pupils in most other schools. Although the present head teacher has over twenty years experience of headship he is only in his second year as head teacher of this school. The school's last OfSTED inspection was in January 2006 where overall effectiveness and leadership and management were judged to be outstanding. The school has implemented the leadership structure as explained in the following diagram. The head teacher, deputy head teachers and business manager make up the leadership team. The management team includes the year leaders and numeracy and literacy co-ordinator. This group of teachers are paid TLR 1s and have been in post since Easter 2006. The teachers with other responsibilities including curriculum posts are paid TLR 2s but will not be in post until September 2007. At the moment curriculum leadership and other responsibilities are carried out by post holders on the old teachers management scale. The structure below has six less managers than before restructuring.



Leadership Structure of Pear School.

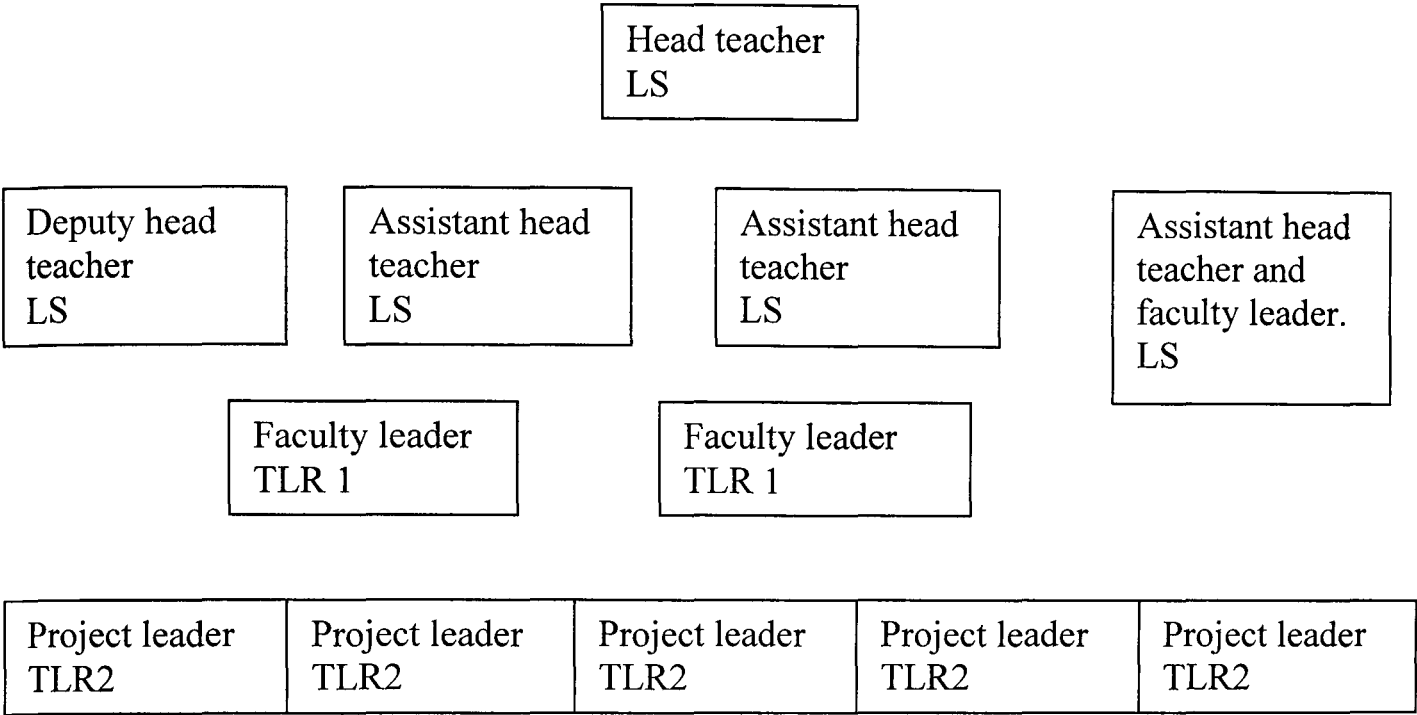
Plum School.

Plum School is an inner city school serving one of the most socially deprived areas in the country. It has approximately seven hundred and twenty pupils aged between three and eleven years old. Nearly all pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and most are from homes where English is not used as the first language. The present head teacher has been in post for six years. The school's last OfSTED inspection was in February and March 2006 where overall effectiveness and leadership and management were judged to be outstanding. The school has implemented the leadership structure as explained in the following diagram. The head teacher, deputy head teachers and assistant head teachers make up the leadership team. The management team includes faculty leaders for early years, transition (years 4, 5 and 6), years 1, 2 and 3 and the special educational needs co-ordinator. This group of teachers are paid TLR 1s. There are five teachers responsible for specific projects;

1. creative arts
2. ICT, technology and marketing
3. sports, health and extended activities
4. citizenship and equality

5. humanities.

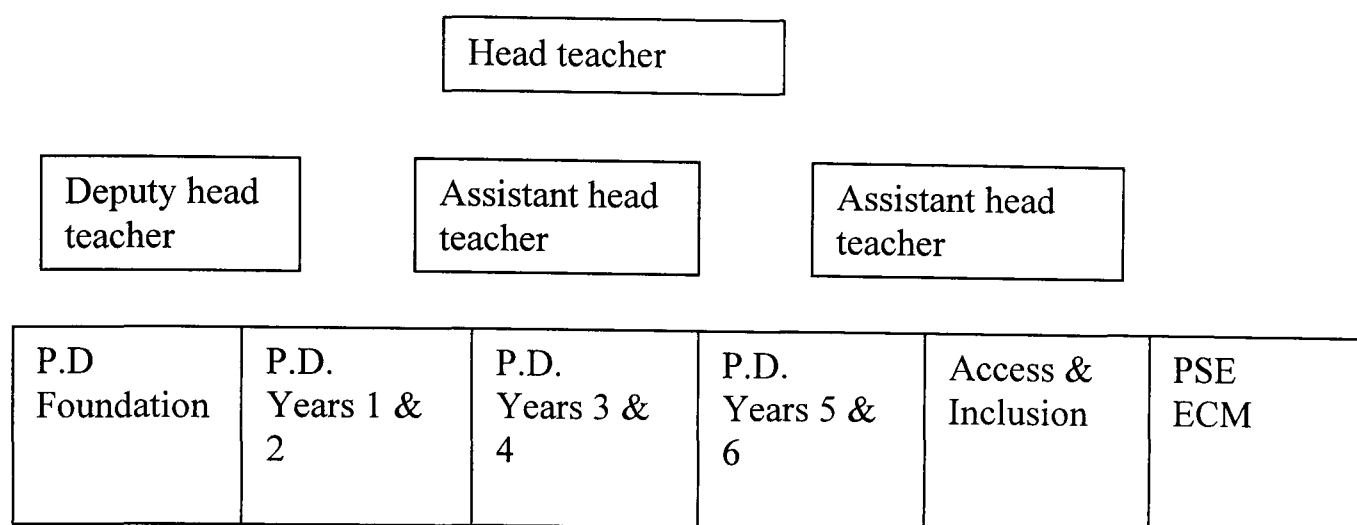
These teachers are paid TLR2s. All posts were filled at the time of interview.



Leadership Structure of Plum School.

Apple School.

Apple school has approximately six hundred and seventy five pupils aged between three and eleven years old. Most pupils come from white backgrounds but an above average proportion comes from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. The present head teacher has been in post for eighteen years. The school’s last OfSTED inspection was in March 2006 where overall effectiveness and leadership and management were judged to be outstanding. The school has implemented the leadership structure as explained in the following diagram. The head teacher, deputy head teacher and two assistant head teachers make up the leadership team. The management team includes four phase directors, and two other teachers with responsibilities. One for access & inclusion, the other for personal & social education and the every child matters agenda. Other teachers are responsible for the curriculum but are not part of the formal leadership structure.



Leadership Structure of Apple School

Format for sections 2 -4.

In order to make it easier for the reader to understand the analysis in the following three sections titles use the following format:

1. **Section headings are numbered, bold, underlined and centred.**

Concepts are underlined, bold and aligned to the left margin.

- **Categories are bold with a bullet and aligned to the left margin.**

Sub-categories (occasionally used) are bold and aligned to the left margin.

Quotations from the schools are in italics with the school name in brackets after them and single spaced. Occasionally the quotes involve more than one speaker. Initials or a number are used to signify different speakers depending on the school.

2. Analysis of the Semi – Structured Interviews with the Head teachers.

1. The head teacher interviews have enabled me to identify the following concepts that appear to have a major influence on the success of distributed leadership.

Summary of Concepts Identified in the Head Teacher Interviews.

Head teacher interviews

Concept	Categories	Sub-categories
1. Autonomy and self sufficiency	A very strong sense of school identity and community.	
	A robust attitude to outside influences	
	Strong Leadership from the Head Teacher.	
	Compliance tools.	
2. Contingency	Visionary Leadership	
	Pragmatic Distribution	
	Pragmatic Recruitment.	
	Planned Leadership Structures	
3. Empowerment	Shared Ethos.	Learning about the school
	Support Structures.	Priorities for the structure
	Delegation.	
	A belief in the benefits of empowerment.	
4. Accountability	A belief in Accountability	
	A Culture of Accountability	

The Concept of Autonomy and self sufficiency.

This is very strongly associated with the situation as described in the critical review that allows successful distributed leadership to take place. It is made up of the following categories:

- A very strong sense of school identity and community.

In two of the schools the head teachers regularly when interviewed talked of the importance of doing things in the school way. This was seen as unique and head teachers were clear that they were successful because of this school identity.

I say it is like the marines, we are the Pear team we are going over the hill together. (Pear)

In all three schools teachers and staff are expected to adhere to the school ethos and are selected with this very clearly in mind.

And indeed when I appoint staff I actually ensure I appoint staff who I feel will share our vision and commitment. (Apple)

The success of two schools meant that the expertise they developed was used to take the lead within the region.

A lot of the ideas come from the association. A team effort across schools but lead by us, (Plum)

- **A robust attitude to outside influences.**

All three schools have responded positively to staffing structure requirements. Head teachers have used the opportunity to create the structure that they believe will be best for the school and have resisted outside pressures to conform to common models of application.

No, we were influenced in the way we looked at issues to do with the law. We weren't influenced in how we designed the posts, not at all. (Plum)

All head teachers have used the opportunity to plan for distributed leadership.

We went straight in with our structure and our system from day one and as a consequence of that all of those staff who were either promoted to or who at the time were currently phase leaders or whatever became part of that new structure received a very clear message from me that I was giving them empowerment, (Apple)

One of the characteristics of the head teachers was their strength of conviction that the good of the school came first. If they did not believe that expectations, requirements or influences from outside were good for the school they resisted them.

Whenever I am contacted by the authority I will say why do you want to know? Is it statutory, will it benefit our pupils, and our staff will it benefit our school? And if the answer is no for those then we won't do it. (Pear)

All three head teachers were in agreement that the leadership structure of the school was compromised by the school budget.

I think it would make it a lot easier if we had more funds to develop that structure further. (Plum)

- **Strong Leadership from the Head Teacher.**

All three head teachers exhibited very strong individual characteristics of leadership based on many years of headship experience. The success achieved in two of the schools can be directly attributed to the lead given by the head teacher.

And I had to change the staffing, the personnel and the culture of the school. And the bulk of that was done in 6 years. It was only then that I was able to start to establish a culture that I was comfortable with. And within that culture have come the structures and systems you see now. (Apple)

In the other school the head teacher had only been in post for just over a year, but had led a successful school for nineteen years before that.

All three head teachers exert a very powerful influence over the activity of the school. Responsibility is given to others but the head teacher makes the final decision based on the benefit to children.

They hadn't measured the impact of attainment across the curriculum enough to convince me and the delivery plan and the curriculum governors that that was the way to go. So we had PPA across the whole year. We had debated and heated discussions, all very professional, and a laugh. And we came to the conclusion that we stick with monitoring the year, change of staff, change of children, mobility, and measure the difference. (Plum)

All three head teachers have a strong desire to lead from the front but have learnt that they need to occasionally curb this sense of dynamism.

And so I do I try to curb my enthusiasm some times, and that's why I need the other people as a sounding board for me. I am at the moment trying to tread the line, (Pear)

They understand the tension between their role and that of other leaders in school. They are aware of how they behave so that distributed leadership will not be undermined.

Although they are doing most of this and most of that I've still got all the files and master files. I don't change their evaluations in any way, but I still want to have that overview. (Plum)

- **Compliance tools.**

Head teachers recognise that they need to use a range of tools to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is consistent. The tools judged to be the most valuable were school policies, performance management, systems for monitoring and evaluating and school development plans.

You need consistency in policy areas, All of these things are very much part of a whole school approach and therefore you need to make certain there's consistency applied in what you do. (Apple)

And don't think any body would say here that they didn't know that was the school policy. If they miss something, they're new; it will be picked up on. They are not in trouble the first time. (Plum)

This has led to a culture of honest evaluation in all three schools.

I was looking at books randomly and I was disappointed in some classes not all, some classes had inconsistency for example marking and presentation that was used. So I brought it back to the year group managers' senior management team meeting and said politely that I am really disappointed that there is no consistency across the board. (Pear)

In all three schools communication was mentioned as important. In one school communication structures were perceived as vital in ensuring compliance and consistency of practice.

So the different types of communication have to be quite tightly organised so that nobody is left out. (Plum)

This category will be described in more detail when explaining the concept of accountability.

These categories describe the concept of autonomy and self sufficiency which appear to provide a common context (with surprisingly little variation) in the three research schools for distributed leadership to take place.

The Concept of Contingency.

This concept is based on the leadership style described in the literature review which appears to be manifest in the leadership activity of these head teachers. This leadership style has made a major contribution to the success of these schools. In fact although the head teachers put the success down to the whole school community it can be argued that it is because of their leadership that the schools are successful. Head teachers have moulded the schools in order to achieve their vision. Part of this process has been their recognition of the usefulness of distributing leadership. Categories identified in this concept and the next two make it quite clear that distributed leadership is a contributory factor to school success because the head teachers have decided that it will help them lead effectively. The following categories were identified as describing this:

- **Visionary Leadership**

All three head teachers exhibited a clear vision for the development of the school and took steps to ensure that others understood it and were part of it.

If you like I had a clear vision of what I felt was wanted for the school. And it's easier for an outsider coming into the school to see. But I involve them, (Pear)

The statement above is set in a different context to the other two schools because this was a recent head teacher appointment. However, very quickly, the head teacher has recognised the need to bring staff and governors on board in order to implement his plan for the future.

I share the vision. I've got a very clear vision and philosophy for what I want for the school. And they all support that. They are all on board with that vision. And they know what we want as a school (Apple)

This statement underlines the fact that these head teachers lead from the front and have confidence through experience that what they are striving for is right for the children in their care.

- **Pragmatic Distribution.**

The head teachers distribute leadership for two main reasons. One of these is pragmatic, which will be described here, and the other is because of a philosophical belief in empowering others which will be discussed later.

These head teachers understand the concept of the heroic head teacher but believe that although it is possible (especially in smaller primary schools) to lead in that way there are a variety of reasons why they prefer not to.

If I had to I could do that. I believe I've got the skills and could do that. If I had to lead from the top. I had to do that at my previous school; however it makes my life easier if I can use other people. (Pear)

I've seen it happen, but I also think they tend to move on and it's not sustainable. (Apple)

It is likely to affect them detrimentally in terms of their relationship with the children.

For a head to do it all you wouldn't be working with children, you wouldn't be seeing children. You wouldn't have time. (Plum)

Also in terms of their personal well-being.

Personally no, I've seen very high quality heads who've attempted to. Most of them have retired now and that says a lot about burn out. (Apple)

They also believe that it is better not to do the job by themselves in large primary schools which distinguish them from smaller primary schools where they think it is possible for one person to take a lead.

In a school this size with the issues that we deal with everyday it is not possible for any one person to be able to manage effectively (Pear)

They also recognise that they are not the experts in every area of school life and rely on others to lead.

I've got staff here who are experts in the new numeracy strategy, literacy strategy, I haven't got those skills. I haven't had a class for 26 years, and they have got a lot of skills that I haven't got. (Apple)

All three head teachers managed the work of the governing body and had a strong influence over decisions that were made.

Governors looked at the draft plan and then they were involved, not in the very beginning but as we were going along. Chair, vice chair, key people were involved. (Plum)

Their relationship with the governors was pro-active rather than reactive.

Sorry in January I took to governors. 5 possible structures as a new boy coming in you have to be very careful that you don't come in and say this is what you are going to do and the governors turn around and say oh no you are not. Models were based on the 2 deputy model not the 3. (Pear)

- **Pragmatic Recruitment.**

Head teachers recruit staff based on a proactive plan rather than just reacting to the need to fill vacancies as they arise. In two of the schools it was clear that staff are recruited based on the following criteria.

Staff are appointed who share the vision and ethos of the school as described earlier in this section. They have to compliment the skills already in school in order to give a spread of expertise.

Distributed leadership is about sharing skills out amongst the staff to achieve your ultimate mission to the school. (Apple)

There is also recognition that you need a mix of experience to compliment the team.

We are still bringing in people who offer a wider perspective to compliment those with limited experiences. (Apple)

They are also selected if it is perceived that they have leadership potential.

But most importantly I know if they are enthusiastic, have energy, they'll contribute towards the school and be capable of leading it even if they are not in a leadership position. (Apple)

Leadership potential is then developed in school.

*Res: So you grow your own leaders
HT: Yes, (Plum)*

Another aspect of pragmatic recruitment is pragmatic promotion in order to retain staff that the head teacher does not want to lose. This was identified in one school.

I recognise the fact that there is such high quality staff in those key positions that I think we would lose them very quickly if they weren't involved. And they should be involved, They have got a huge amount of expertise and skill. (Pear).

- **Planned Leadership Structures**

Although all schools have been required by law since 2005 to create staffing structures. A characteristic of these three schools is that they had already created their own structures years ago, or had plans ready to implement when the law changed. They were all in agreement that the structures in place were designed and not arrived at by evolution or accident.

I have deliberately put the structure. (Pear)

By design, we worked it out together for three years all of us. (Plum)

I certainly do not feel it happened by accident. (Apple)

The following sub-categories of this category describe it in more detail:

Learning About the School.

These head teachers have learnt about their schools before making decisions about its future.

There's a lot of expertise and I depend on them if you like to help me understand the Pear way. So I haven't chucked the baby out with the bath water. (Pear)

None of the head teachers had a preconceived idea of what the staffing structure should be before understanding the needs of the school.

I did it purely in terms of not necessarily what I wanted but, I believed was the long term structure for the school and technically the personality does not come into it. (Pear)

It may not be appropriate in a different school, (Plum)

In two schools they have taken a very critical approach to the staffing structures they inherited.

When I came to the school I had a structure that I wasn't comfortable with, I had staff in senior positions who simply weren't performing. (Apple)

They have the strength of their convictions to deal with the conflict that arises when imposing change.

The school was rife with union action with union leaders in key positions and I had to dismantle that before I could even begin. (Apple)

The head teachers were robust in ensuring their decisions about the leadership structure were not influenced by history, individuals or inheritance, but were in the best interests of the children.

Some lost, the 1 point people didn't get TLR1s. And one or two posts needed to go, I don't mean bodies I mean posts. I inherited one or two. (Plum)

Once they understood the schools they were in they took time to design the structure they wanted.

By design, we worked it out together for three years all of us. (Plum)

All three head teachers were in agreement that when they were designing the structure it was very important to get other opinions from staff and to consult.

I would not consider doing anything in the school without sharing it with the senior management team. (Pear)

The reason they took time over the structure was because they wanted something that would last.

In fact it's embedded and you don't develop that over three or four years, it's a long term mission. (Apple)

Priorities for the structure.

The management structures were primarily based on phase responsibilities. Either in faculties or phases of two or three years in the case of two schools or in year teams in the other school.

I then have four phase directors, each with a 2 year area: foundation stage, KS1, lower KS2, upper KS2. (Apple)

These structures were overseen by a leadership team of deputies and assistant head teachers.

The assistant heads support three TLR faculties, (Plum)

Up to this point these structures were similar in all three schools. These are large primary schools with a hierarchical leadership structure.

I believe in the pyramid structure. (Pear)

This enables staff to be managed in small groups.

The structure below me they will have no more than 6. Otherwise there would be quite a number of staff which is not really reasonable, (Plum)

The allocation of other leadership posts reflected the clear differences there are in these schools due to the needs of the children.

And the TLR programme which is changeable, depending on the attainment and the gaps in enrichment. Because there are children here who have never been on a trip. (Plum)

Curriculum posts tended to be of less status than those mentioned above, but this depended on school priorities and differed from school to school.

To coordinate literacy and numeracy in yrs 5,6 related to the ks2 SATS.I though it was critical to leave those two areas particularly in yrs 5,6 with SATS. It is too important to the school. (Pear)

The improved status of all support staff was also very apparent in two of the schools.

We also give each assistant a career structure, whereby there are management points for each particular post. (Plum)

In Pear the school business manager was a member of the leadership team.

All improvements in the staffing structure are evaluated against the impact they have on children learning.

The benefits are that I can certainly as a school offer a fantastic learning experience for children who are here, because we can offer then staff with many different skills, many different qualities and most importantly many different levels of experience. (Apple)

The categories and sub-categories described above illustrate characteristics of the leadership styles of the head teachers in these three schools which have a direct impact on distributed leadership and its success.

The Concept of Empowerment.

The first reason for head teachers recognition that distributed leadership is good practice was pragmatic as described above. As well as pragmatic reasons they have a belief in the benefits to other staff and children if they are empowered to lead. Although this concept is apparent in all three schools it is particularly well articulated by the head teacher of Apple where it is at the heart of his philosophy of school leadership.

And at the heart of my philosophy in all of my years of headship has been empowerment. (Apple)

This means that many of the quotations used to illustrate this concept come from this school. All the concepts described so far have been related to situation, contingency and leader plus. Aspects of this concept begin to lay the foundations for leadership practice

as stretched over groups of individuals to take place. The following categories explain this concept in detail.

- **Shared ethos.**

In order for staff to be empowered to lead head teachers needed to be confident that they all shared a common ethos. If not they will not be given the opportunity to take a lead or be rewarded for it.

I couldn't put my name to this person when they are idle, don't care about the kids, no contribution to school development, no way. And I haven't moved them from one to two either necessarily. The leadership team will not recommend UPS 2 or 3 in a review of performance if it's not backed up by evidence. (Plum)

All three head teachers felt that all staff shared an ethos which was to improve children's education.

I think now we have a clear direction of what our purpose what we are doing, why we are doing it, and in fact, everything we do I believe is for the benefit of those pupils. If it is not for the benefit of the pupils then why are we doing it? (Pear)

They all very strongly believed in discussing issues with staff before making decisions. This has been discussed earlier but it is very relevant to this category.

We worked it out together for three years all of us. We involved every member of staff. Cleaners, cooks, teachers, some parents. (Plum)

By doing this head teachers feel that staff are given a sense of ownership for the decisions that are made.

And again it is a twee expression but we will have shared ownership of it. But everybody will have the opportunity to put there two penneth in as to why or why not we should be doing something. (Pear)

They also feel there is a sense of ownership for the ethos of the school.

We want to add another international dimension to it so that's going to be one of the big foci for the next year or two. And everybody's on board with that. (Apple)

In two schools this ethos fostered a sense of loyalty to the school and the head teacher.

No, this team's loyalty is to me and the school in my view, (Plum)

Because if they know I'm encouraging them and supporting them in terms of their roles they give every ounce they've got in terms of commitment, (Apple)

- **Support Structures.**

Each school had a range of structures to support the leaders in school. The head teachers believed that in order to empower staff to lead they needed continued professional development and training.

Because I feel that if you get the right staff and you give them the appropriate training and you give them the appropriate empowerment they will deliver. (Apple)

It was clearly articulated that if you wanted staff to take on a specific role then they needed training for this.

Then the TLR 2 who are not senior managers, they are all trained up to actually review the performance of teaching assistants. (Plum)

Mentoring by line managers through performance management was also perceived as a powerful means of supporting staff.

Oh, gosh, well first obviously training. There's masses of that going on. We've had to actually link into staff teams so there are clear divides between whose support and who is mentoring who. (Plum)

As well as formal structures of support an ethos of support is created at all levels.

They're all supportive of each other because they know here, relatively inexperienced staff are given key roles, and get on with them and it's just part of the culture that your staff will support you and respect them. (Apple)

The head teachers actually saw it as a responsibility to develop and support staff.

I develop their qualities and when I feel they are ready to take on leadership I give them that opportunity. (Apple)

An important part of the infra-structure of all schools was the meetings and in-service events. These were very important support mechanisms for leadership practice.

Right, the senior management team meet once a week, um, one afternoon per week if we need more we have more. Each year group meet once a week separately within their teams. We also have a staff meeting. (Pear)

In all schools time for leadership practice is allocated, however the budget is expressed in one school as a barrier to giving staff the time they need for the role.

Financially our budget is tight. In terms of financial resources the greatest resource they get is time. Even with this our assistant heads have a day a week additional to PPA time and the management team, the senior team have half a day. (Apple)

- **Delegation.**

In all schools the head teachers empowered staff through delegation.

They have the task of by the end of this month to do the monitoring to check all the books and they are coming back to me with a report for each year groups (Pear)

Delegation is perceived as empowerment by head teachers.

Received a very clear message from me that I was giving them empowerment, they were to take on responsibilities for self evaluation and self assessment for their phase, (Apple)

In two schools the effect of this delegation empowered staff to initiate leadership activity.

The music That didn't come from the top that came from the creative arts session. And that is now the status quo. Teaching assistants are coming up with more good ideas as well as teachers without any points. (Plum)

Head teachers did not feel challenged by staff who wanted to develop ideas and encouraged them.

And so she said do you know anything about it, and I said yes, loads, and she said can we find out more, and I said we'll get the rep to come and chat. And she's taken it on board. Because she saw it. And she developed it, And she is now the expert and she has involved other staff, as well. (Apple)

In one school it was clear that the leadership practice through delegation had engendered self motivation and initiative in staff working towards a common purpose.

And as a consequence of that they'll be feeding back tonight to the leadership team meeting with the initiatives they are undertaking, with work scrutinise in subject areas etc. So they've developed this philosophy themselves really from the opportunities we provided for them. (Apple)

Empowerment through delegation in these schools is therefore quite complicated and I would describe it as a spectrum. At one extreme the head teacher formally delegates tasks and staff are very clear about what is expected. At the other end of the spectrum staff take the lead in activities and are self motivated and display initiative with the encouragement of the head teacher. It is in this aspect that leadership practice can be fostered amongst groups of staff.

The radio station this lunch time. There are about 6 staff involved, I've not actually been involved. (Apple)

In one school the head teacher articulates this in terms of the interactions amongst staff.

And its almost threads that bind the whole together. Because I know if I'm not here, I was away, the school would continue to flourish because it's all the threads that bind it together, the interactions between all of the leadership team at different levels at different times of the week. There is a continual interaction, embedding our overall philosophy and at the same time creating further strong links in all that we are doing in the school. (Apple)

Head teachers are clear that in order to allow this leadership practice they ensure that the activities are in line with the ethos of the school.

They are high calibre people and therefore my belief is they should have the ability to make decisions for themselves. Report back, yes, but not to go off at a tangent. And sort of run their own mini school somewhere and never the twain shall meet. (Pear)

This will be further explained when describing the next concept of accountability. The head teachers were also aware of the fine balance needed so that they did not undermine this empowerment.

There is no point giving these people this role if I take it over from them. Although I have been around during their meetings I believe it's their meetings and it's sacrosanct to their, them. (Pear)

- **A belief in the benefits of empowerment.**

All the head teachers believed that there were benefits to empowerment. In terms of the quality of education children received. This was most clearly articulated by the head teacher from Apple.

What I'm attempting to do here is allow these youngest to leave this school as independent thinkers, uhm, with all the skills they require to enter secondary education and ultimately their adult life, and I want to give them a really good baseline for that. So therefore our philosophy is geared to achieving that. I know I can't do that alone, and therefore I need to give empowered responsibility to each staff to help me deliver that. (Apple)

The personal development of teachers for their future careers was also a benefit.

And that year also consolidated a lot of staff skills and then 5 of them went to key jobs in the city. (Plum)

One head teacher also perceived a benefit to the culture or ethos of the school as a learning community.

And within that culture have come the structures and systems you see now. And at the heart of my philosophy in all of my years of headship has been empowerment. (Apple)

The same head teacher also recognised the benefits to himself of empowerment.

All the time I'm trying to encourage. I keep using this word, empower staff to be big players. And that way I get so many rewards from them. (Apple)

Empowerment of pupils was a benefit recognised by the head teacher of Apple.

Huge, do you know why? We empower pupils, the culture is bottom up as well as top down. These kids have got so much confidence, uhm., When I talk about empowerment it goes right through into the classroom as well. They're independent children, independent minds, we encourage them to go off and research, to investigate, to explore, make their own decisions. (Apple)

Empowerment was also seen as a benefit to the future well being of the school.

And it's all part of building capacity. And I've got my next generation of leaders in the school already, so it's self generating in a sense. (Apple)

These categories explain the importance head teachers place upon the investment they make in supporting teachers to lead because of their belief that distributing leadership in this way will improve the education of children.

The Concept of Accountability.

All three schools provide high levels of support for leadership activities as explained above. As well as support there is a high level of challenge to staff to continually improve the education of children. It is also a means by which the head teachers ensure that leadership activity is managed so that all are working to the same goals. This is the concept of accountability as explained by the three head teachers. The following categories explain this concept.

- **A belief in accountability**

All three head teachers clearly believe it is part of their role to hold others accountable for their actions.

I will go back after half term, they know this and I will check that actions have been taken. (Pear)

I'll be asking them to furnish me with the information and the data I require. (Apple)

It has been made clear to other leaders in school that they have a responsibility to hold their teams to account.

It's just monitored by senior managers in terms of the outputs. (Plum)

They need to be abreast of what is happening in their phase. (Apple)

Class teachers without formal leadership roles are expected to ensure that they review their own teaching.

And each class teacher has to target monitoring there own children in what we invest in them in addition to the normal curriculum, the extended curriculum. The family learning children, the emotional intelligence children, and so on, they do that themselves. (Plum)

This accountability is in place for a number of reasons. First, there is a belief that all should be striving continually to improve the education of children.

I think now we have a clear direction of what our purpose what we are doing, why we are doing it, and in fact, everything we do I believe is for the benefit of those pupils. (Pear)

Also head teachers feel a personal responsibility for the quality of education provided.

You know that investment of money or bodies, has it had an impact on the children, or was it a waste of time? (Plum)

Head teachers saw ensuring consistency as very important and that this was more of a challenge in a large primary school.

It's a very big school. And it's what we want. It said in a recent report consistent leadership and we need consistency in what we do in this school and uhm, and whilst I think we are a very progressive school in much of what we do in the curriculum, I personally think you need consistency in curriculum planning, you need consistency in policy areas, you need consistency in rewards and sanctions. All of these things are very much part of a whole school approach and therefore you need to make certain there's consistency applied in what you do. (Apple)

Secondly the head teachers felt the need to manage leadership activity in the school.

You've also got to remember where it all is and where it all fits. Its not going to fall you know or collapse for one or two reasons, but keeping on top of everything is hard. (Plum)

This is because they feel ultimately responsible for the leadership of the school.

Even though you've got someone monitoring there's a level where you've got to carry the can. (Plum)

Also to ensure that everyone is working to the same goals.

I need the outcomes because that is part of our information bank that we need to show how our school is performing as a whole, but I'm

also very interested in the processes to be sure they are really matching our philosophy. (Apple)

Finally because of the positive professional benefits for staff.

What we don't have in this school in any way, shape or form is apathy. Everybody is at the cutting edge of what they are doing. (Apple)

- **A Culture of Accountability**

Head teachers perceive accountability as positive and an environment that fosters this has been created in all three schools. This environment is characterised by an open and honest dialogue amongst staff.

We are an open team, transparent and we manage it around this table largely. (Plum)

Staff welcome and expect positive professional criticism.

So in that self critically constructive climate we achieve a huge amount because staff are very open to new ideas and to genuine constructive criticism. (Apple)

Head teachers expect staff to be self critical.

Um but I do believe the staff have to be self critical or self evaluative to say this is not right this is not working. (Pear)

Conflict is dealt with positively and openly.

And in the end they can disagree these people as much as they like and there have been disagreements and we've modified what we've done. But when we decide together then we are united. (Pear)

One head teacher sees disagreement as a symptom of a positive evaluative atmosphere.

Yes, we have disagreements but they're usually open, and And dynamic and last a day or two, but you get this in any institution where you have got where you've got very active minds working for the good of the team and the school and that's what we have here. (Apple)

Although school leaders had responsibility for monitoring teaching.

They were to take on responsibilities for self evaluation and self assessment for their phase, (Apple)

All three head teachers felt it was important for them to monitor classroom activity.

If I was somewhere else doing this, that and the other doing everything for the school and wouldn't be near the children. And I think that would be wrong, so the impact of what they are learning should be addressed all the time, that's what it's all about, so I think you can't separate the two. (Plum)

Two head teachers felt it was important for them personally to monitor classroom practice without prior arrangement.

I can go into any classroom at any time and monitor a lesson. Without any due warning, I just turn up. (Apple)

This activity was perceived as part of the head teacher's normal routine.

I went on one of my tours around the school; I was looking at books randomly (Pear)

As discussed under the concept of autonomy and self sufficiency all schools have compliance tools in place to ensure accountability and consistency.

Accountability then is an important concept in these schools, helping head teachers to ensure that leadership is managed to meet school aims and improve the education of children.

Summary of Concepts Identified in the Head Teacher Interviews.

Head teacher interviews

Concept	Categories	Sub-categories
1. Autonomy and self sufficiency	A very strong sense of school identity and community.	
	A robust attitude to outside influences	
	Strong Leadership from the Head Teacher.	
	Compliance tools.	
2. Contingency	Visionary Leadership	
	Pragmatic Distribution	
	Pragmatic Recruitment.	
	Planned Leadership Structures	
3. Empowerment	Shared Ethos.	Learning about the school
	Support Structures.	Priorities for the structure
	Delegation.	
	A belief in the benefits of empowerment.	
4. Accountability	A belief in Accountability	
	A Culture of Accountability	

Four concepts have been identified from these interviews as being instrumental in ensuring distributed leadership takes place successfully in these schools. All are interdependent of each other and have had a direct positive impact on the leader plus aspect of distributed leadership explained in the literary review. They have also created a climate from the head teachers’ perspective in which value added distributed leadership is fostered. Aspects of empowerment for example create the context for concertive action (Gronn, 2003), or leadership practice (Spillane, 2006)

3. Analysis of the Focus Group Interviews.

The focus group interviews enabled me to identify three concepts associated with distributed leadership which explain the functions, internal workings and relationships that characterise leadership teams in these successful schools. These begin to give an insight into the interpersonal relationships and interactions that take place during leadership practice.

Focus group interviews

Concept	Categories	Sub-categories
5.Common Purpose	Common understanding	
	Institutional loyalty	
	Functional leadership	School size
		Communication
		Support the head teacher
		Monitoring and evaluation
	Team accountability	
6.Nurturing Leadership Practice	Team work being valued	
	Team facilitation	Problem solving
		Sharing ideas
		Advice
	Optimistic leaders	Positive leaders
		Change and flexibility
		Self confidence
		Experience
		Open and honest
		Sense of humour
	Team member benefits	
7.Personal Interdependency	Personal relationships,	Personal relationships are valued
		Nurturing atmosphere
		Friendship and affection
		Intuition and empathy
	Characteristics of interpersonal relationships	Trust
		Respect
		Support and reassurance

A number of the categories within these concepts triangulate with the beliefs of the head teachers. Although the concepts identified are common to all three schools some of the categories to be discussed have stronger representation in some schools than in others. My commentary takes this into account, but because the sample of schools used in this research is small categories identified in only one school are still of importance as they help to tell the story of successful leadership in that school.

The Concept of Common Purpose.

Some of the categories in this concept are similar to those identified in the concept of autonomy and self sufficiency described in the last section. They underline the fact that leadership is successful because all staff have signed up to the school ethos and the head teacher vision. The following categories describe this.

- **Common Understanding.**

This category demonstrates that distributive leadership is dependant on leadership practice shared by individual leaders in these schools. In all three schools it was clearly articulated that school leaders shared common goals for the school and worked together to achieve them.

And we've got a vision really of what we want the school to go which we share with one another. (Plum)

In order for this to happen they worked together in the team to reach common understandings on how to improve the school together.

And there's usually a way forward from that, common ground, you do your best to find common ground. (Pear)

Members of the team in one school felt that this was very important because it meant that all team members would then present a united front.

And when we come out as a united front and we are able to disseminate it to the rest of the staff. (Plum)

This united front ensured that they all gave the same message.

And when we go out we are all singing from the same hymn sheet. (Plum)

In another school they believed that this common understanding meant that the quality of their work would inevitably be better.

And the ECM, it's a big agenda, and Irene and I could not possibly put that together if everybody wasn't on board, (Apple)

Working together in this way was seen as very positive for members of the team.

It was a lovely atmosphere with everybody pulling together. (Apple)

Two leaders in one school recognised that having a similar way of working was a major strength in improving the quality of their leadership practice.

Yea, well all be happy and do it well together. And I think you're quite similar in that way. There's no margin of we do or we don't, you definitely get it done, but the way you deliver that, I think some other people haven't got that with their teams so that it can create not such a, I don't know, not such a working atmosphere maybe. (Pear)

Throughout all the interviews members involved re-enforced this sense of common understanding with regular agreement of each others beliefs. The researcher recorded

forty six verbal expressions of common agreement in response to what another team member said.

Y5 I actually really enjoy saying this is what we are going to be doing and its about being enthusiastic about it (loud agreement from others)
Y3 It's almost like being energised. (Pear)

1 I think we respect one another,
5 I was going to use exactly the same words (Apple)

Other types of behaviour were also recorded that signified agreement. Nodding to re-enforce agreement was used regularly.

Yep (nods) and we always have that quiet conversation together where, (Pear)

Intuitive sentence completion was used to re-enforce common agreement in all three schools on 19 occasions.

3 We are not frightened to try different things and different ways of doing things because
1 We are not frightened of disagreeing. (Plum)

In one school there was an example of a leader joining in with another speaker to re-enforce common understandings.

Y3 I'll respect that Joan's got a knowledge of certain things that I haven't got
Y3 Y5 and the same thing back. (both say phrase together) (Pear)

The same pair of leaders exhibited an intuitive understanding of each other without needing to speak.

Y3 I don't always, we had a meeting the other day.
Y5 Yeh, target
Y3 Yeh the target, (laughs). Ah you know then do you (laughs) but we did you know, and its like OK. (Pear)

In this category the behaviour, as well as expressed opinions and beliefs demonstrate that where leadership practice is shared team members have a strong common understanding of each other and their purpose.

- **Institutional Loyalty**

Evidence in these interviews bear out the belief head teachers hold that staff all work to a shared ethos and are loyal to the school. Head teachers pragmatic selection and strong leadership described above would explain the characteristics of institutional loyalty below. Firstly as the head teachers described above members of the leadership team

were not only loyal to the school ethos but expected everyone in school to be loyal to that ethos.

And everybody has got to be quite loyal. (Pear)

A common theme for new staff was that an important part of their induction was to learn to fit in with the school ethos.

And I do think its catching isn't it, so if you are new to the school you can just catch on to this kind of attitude and ethos very quickly, it's infectious. (Pear)

If they could not do that they tended to move to a different school.

I can think of a member of staff 2 years ago. Never really settled with us, now that's unusual. It is unusual; we very rarely lose staff because they're unhappy. And this one member of staff was not altogether happy. And it was because that person could not embrace the ethos, could not see this team play, this working together and moved on to the right place for that person. (Apple)

Another reason for this loyalty was because the schools had such good reputations staff were very happy, even proud to be working there.

That is what has create Pear, and why its successful and people are proud of that. (Pear)

Leaders were very positive about the school.

*6 It's a very vibrant school
3 Very forward thinking (Apple)*

Pleasure was gained from this sense of common loyalty.

Look at that weekend before OfSTED when we all came in, we had such a good weekend. We had the best weekend, it sounds silly doesn't it. Everybody bringing in Pizzas, and we went to the pub in the evening, and everybody rushing around saying can you help, (Apple)

It was recognised in one school that you needed loyalty, but you also had to have the common understanding of your aims as well.

But I think its something else as well though, you can have all of this as well in a school, but it won't necessarily move forward the learning will it? We are all in our own different ways absolutely devoted to learning and moving things on, (Apple)

In the two schools where the head teacher had been in post for a number of years there was a strong sense of loyalty to them.

And you know Mark is the only head who has ever been to the netball tournament in the whole of the borough and I think that's really something. (Apple)

The leaders recognise qualities of the head teachers that they admire.

And Jane is a very good head a very dynamic person, she knows where she is going, we know where she wants to go she makes it very clear to us. (Plum)

Leaders in one school valued highly the principles displayed by their head teacher which helped to explain this strong loyalty.

And he cares passionately for the school, and he appoints people who will care passionately. (Apple)

As well as this loyalty to the head teacher there was also a loyalty to members of the teams they were responsible for. This was clearly articulated in two of the schools visited.

I do sometimes think with my team. We are very much inside year 5 and were year 5, and we are doing really well, (acting team reactions). (Pear)

Leaders also foster loyalty in their teams recognising that because they work together a lot it is inevitable.

And I think, you know we do create that kind of loyalty to our teams, because we are so big as well and because we do spend so much time in our teams. (Pear)

They also spoke very highly of colleagues in school.

Lets be honest it's wider than this room, we've got a most amazing staff. (Apple)

Institutional loyalty is intrinsically entwined with the common understanding explained earlier. Both categories compliment each other and help to explain the contribution distributed leadership makes to the success of these schools.

- **Functional Leadership.**

Leaders recognised that there were a number of functional reasons why it was important to have leadership teams working together. These will be described below.

School size.

Leadership teams were seen as necessary because of the large size of these primary schools.

I think we've got a picture from the different faculties, we are all from different faculties. We bring that picture together for the whole picture of the school. (Plum)

Leaders were responsible for large teams of staff which was a characteristic of these large primary schools.

It's not even just the teachers, for us as head of years it's like the 5 teachers, it's the LSAs, the trainees, you know the team is actually quite big. You're looking at 10 or 11 staff maybe, (Pear)

Communication.

Leadership teams were important in ensuring effective communication.

Therefore if teachers have got questions we can answer them which is why I like coming to this meeting. (Plum)

They had a role in transmitting information from the head teacher to other teachers and vice versa.

And anything directed from Brian goes into our teams. (Pear)

And draw back to the next meeting, this is the idea we had what did your team say? (Pear)

One leader enjoyed the communicating role.

And when you go to your own meeting I really quite like delivering the message and sharing my enthusiasm for something. (Pear)

It was important to use communication to clarify thinking before disseminating the decisions that the leadership teams made.

And that means that it is important we all communicate and by communicating in these sort of meetings we actually clarify, knock points round. And when we come out as a united front and we are able to disseminate it to the rest of the staff (Plum)

An important characteristic of this communication was that it gave an insight and overview of the school and its work.

I'm upper KS2 faculty, but you get the whole view of other faculties which is very good because I know how the child starts in nursery, and what they end like in year 6 (Plum)

This was judged to have a beneficial effect on the pupils.

And actually the children as well get a better deal because you know what's going on throughout the school. (Apple)

Support the head teacher.

One school felt that in these large schools a head teacher would not be able to have an insight into the work of the whole school without the leadership team representing different parts of the school.

We get a really knowledgeable insight into what's going on and how things are working and how they are not, whereas as a head teacher you've got so many other things to do working in your own environment you are not really going to feel what's going on in each year group I don't think. (Pear)

This view triangulated with the head teachers perceptions that they could not lead the school effectively alone.

We are almost his eyes in each year group (Pear)

Leadership meetings helped to ensure that there was clarity to the work of leaders.

And sometimes it clarifies my thinking about what we are doing. Because Jane does no and its d,d (hand movement to signify Jane's clarity) ands it puts you back onto the track that we are aiming for because it would be easy to diverge. (Plum)

One school felt that the size of the head teacher's workload meant that she relied on them for leadership practice.

I think with the heads workload, especially in this school. I think they have got so much workload. I think they need to devolve a little bit to keep their sanity because they wouldn't be keeping everything on the go at the same time. (Plum)

Monitoring and Evaluation.

The final function identified was that of the leaders' role in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

The work on evaluation we are doing in each class, that's the big thing we are doing at the moment, you know, observing. (Pear)

All leaders in the three schools saw this as one of the priorities of there role.

We have a timetable almost, a routine of constant monitoring (Apple)

Monitoring and evaluation took up the majority of individual leadership time.

And on those days they do book scrutinise, lesson observations, PM, looking in classrooms, just a quick 15 minutes dip in. Checking that

certain policies are being followed. All our monitoring and evaluation is done on our leadership and management days. (Plum)

Again there was recognition that the head teacher would have difficulty doing this without them.

If you were to say to Mark you've got to observe every single teacher each half term, you know that's not an easy thing to do so he's got us to do that uh., (Pear)

As well as doing this work as individuals they valued the opportunity to share leadership practice.

When we're tracking progress together and doing book scrutiny its great because we are all together looking at the different faculties (Plum)

These functions triangulate with the head teachers pragmatic need for other leaders to share the load. This is recognised by leaders. There are aspects where leaders work as individuals, but also shared aspects of leadership.

- **Team Accountability.**

Leaders expressed the head teacher's belief in the need for accountability.

And the whole concept of shared responsibilities, and really talking as a team and reflecting the decisions that have been made at top level filtering right the way through the ranks I think is evident in the day to day practice. (Pear)

Leaders felt accountable to the head teacher.

A t least when she, when we have meetings we all go away knowing what we've got to do it's up to us then to make sure that takes place. (Plum)

As well as seeing it as one of their responsibilities to hold others to account.

I wouldn't say nagging, because it's nice nagging, but in Mavis's role she understands the need to keep reminding them of their role. (Apple)

Leaders also expressed the importance of taking ideas to the leadership team for ratification, ensuring that decisions made fitted the ethos of the school.

But, that we think would fit in to the way we work as well and I said I'd bring them to the senior management team and we'd talk about them, (Pear)

Accountability is perceived as an empowering responsibility for school improvement.

We've got a really involved and quite a sophisticated model of school improvement and how subject leaders report, they report to governors

every term, they produce their at the end of the year their priorities for the next year, ... and they're given that ownership of it and that responsibility. (Apple)

Accountability is also seen as beneficial to career development by one leader because of the constant challenge to improve practice.

But you're aspiring to more all the time so in your own career, you know, you're being pushed and you're being faced with challenges all the time. (Pear)

Accountability was also expressed as an expectation that others weren't being asked to do things that leaders wouldn't do themselves.

If I can do it as a leader as well as a teacher I expect them to do the same. (Plum)

Leaders recognised that staff needed support but there were high expectations of performance.

They need the support but there is the expectation (Apple)

If those expectations were not met then there were consequences.

And it works in another way saying these are the markers and we're looking for at certain classes and if you've not achieved those markers we are heading for a difficult year 6 again. (Plum)

The categories of common understanding, institutional loyalty, functional leadership and accountability describe the concept of common purpose. There were no tensions identified between the beliefs of head teachers and those of leaders. They tended to compliment the views of head teachers and created an environment for leader plus activity as well as shared practice. It appears to be vital for distributed leadership to be successful in these large primary schools that there is this concept of common purpose amongst the leaders in school.

The Concept of Teams Nurturing Leadership Practice.

The schools researched have created an environment of common purpose in which distributed leadership happens through both aspects of leader plus as manifest in the individual and leadership practice as shared by groups of leaders. It is then within the workings of these teams that leadership practice is nurtured. The following categories describe this nurturing.

- **Team Work is Valued.**

A common theme amongst all three schools was that leaders valued their membership of teams.

I can work with the team. That's the important thing for me. I can work with them. (Plum)

They regarded the work that they carried out in the teams as valuable and important to the schools well-being.

There is a contribution of opinions with regard to anything for developing the school, uh, we are all experienced, we all have management skills of some type or other, and therefore what we have to say can be valued. And we feel it should be valued. And it is valued..... But we have a contribution to the management of the school. (Plum)

Leaders also regard the work of other teams in the school as important and value there contribution.

*2 And actually our TLR meetings.
5 They've been fabulous. (Apple)*

In one school there was an insight that individuals could not be as successful as the team in carrying out their work because it was the contribution of the different people that added value.

*6 We don't work as individuals.
7 You can't be driven on your own because you need all the little parts. (Apple)*

In two schools the quality of this team work was perceived as a reason for the schools success and set them apart from other schools.

And people who leave will say it's just fantastic at PEAR because you just support each other so much. At times it is hard work but you've got the support of everybody, everybody pulls together ... Its not like that in other schools from what I can see and that creates quite a lot of bad feeling. (Pear)

Leaders in one school understood that their head teacher depended on the work in the teams to fulfil his vision.

Well even John, even John sitting there doesn't always get his own way. He's prepared, he'll have a vision, and he'll run with it, wont he? (agreement) but he can't do that without the support of everybody else and he listens. (Apple)

Leaders also realised that they had to adopt a collegiate style when leading their teams in order to get the best from them.

Yr3 I'm not the type of person to say well we are doing it my way. The way that we end up doing it I want it to be absolutely right. So it's almost like that measure, they know that I'm going to absolutely professional and want it done, it will be done successfully, but, the means of getting there I'm happy to.

Yr5 Make sure their happy.

Yr3 Yea, well all be happy and do it well together. Don't they, for us. And because we are professional they've never had to be a situation where. I suppose you could say perhaps if you are too friendly you can't deliver a hard message, but with our teams. (Pear)

The teams were valued for ensuring that you could get the best solutions for the school.

We put forward an idea or proposal and we talk about it to get the best solution. ... it's about the common aim that Alison said earlier is the best for the school. (Apple)

In one school leaders valued their position on the teams because they were able to make a contribution to school development which they could not do as class teachers.

I contribute more than I could as a class teacher. (Pear)

This gave some leaders a sense of power which they liked.

Yea, your more powerful aren't you, you can have more of a say, (Pear)

They also took their responsibility as leadership team members very seriously.

And I sit here sometimes and think, oh, I'm being trusted with this big responsibility (Pear)

This was because they recognised that what they decided in leadership meetings directly impacted on the school.

And also in these meetings we're saying should we try this and it's happening. In two months time we will see it's actually happened rather than just saying and it's impacted on everyone. (Pear)

It could be argued that this category is an aspect of common purpose because all schools valued the work of teams, however common purpose is about ethos whereas team work is a tool to be used that leaders happen to agree is a useful means of fulfilling the aims of the school. Without valuing the team work the other nurturing categories would not be effective in fostering leadership practice.

- **Team Facilitation.**

Within this category are identified some of the activities carried out by the leadership teams which facilitate their work and are perceived as useful by individual members. The sub-categories below describe these activities.

Problem Solving

In all three schools leaders thought that they solved problems in teams.

We put forward an idea or proposal and we talk about it to get the best solution. (Apple)

Two types of problem solving were identified. One was a form of refinement of an idea as it evolved through discussion.

It's not necessary; it can be discussed as well by the group, therefore whatever a person says can be modified, improved upon, (Plum)

Another was the team reaching decisions about how they would deal with particular situations.

*Yr 5 so we can have a quiet word together and say owe that's a bit tricky, how are we
Yr 3 Going to cope with that (Pear)*

Within the teams when problem solving took place it was expressed in all schools that there was disagreement amongst members.

*7 We don't always agree.
3 No we don't agree but we respect each other. (Apple)*

In one school it was seen as inevitable because of the work they did.

There are bound to be differences or we wouldn't be managers (Plum)

This was perceived in all schools to be a positive characteristic of the interactions between team members.

I'll respect that Irene's got a knowledge of certain things that I haven't got and the same thing (both say phrase together) back so you know we both put forward opinions and if we differ I'm still, although I might still think that what I think is perhaps is where I want to go, I've got a respect for Irene that I will listen to what she's saying because I know she's got that kind of intelligence in an area I haven't got. So I'm open to listening to her. (Pear)

Disagreements were not taken personally, but seen as professional.

No don't take it personally, these are professional discussions, not personal discussions, we move on from there. (Plum)

Leaders in one school were in agreement that disagreement did not affect their relationships.

*5 But we do have differences of opinion as well
All Oh, yes we do.
5 But we don't fall out about it. (Apple)*

It was recognised that it was sometimes necessary to resolve disagreements with a compromise.

People disagree openly and you can talk about it, and there's usually a way forward from that, common ground, you do your best to find common ground. (Pear)

One school recognised that sometimes.

We agree to disagree. (Apple)

Even though agreement wasn't always resolved leaders said that they would support the agreement of the team.

And again differences are discussed here. You know now let's talk about this and get the air clear. And when we go out we are all singing from the same hymn sheet Even though sometimes we're a little bit, I'm not totally sold on this one whereas other colleagues maybe, (Plum)

This was based on an understanding expressed in one school of the negative effect caused when leaders were seen by others to be in a state of disagreement.

Whatever I'm doing has an impact on other people, and whatever they are doing will impact on me so there's got to be that common understanding that we don't disagree because it impacts negatively. (Pear)

Sharing ideas.

Leaders in one school valued the opportunities they had to talk about issues in teams.

That's important as well just to chat to each other. (Apple)

This talk allowed them to share ideas.

And we can take ideas from other members of our phases to these TLR meetings as well. (Apple)

This was expressed in two schools as using the team as a sounding board.

Because I'm new to the role it's nice to bounce ideas of people who have been here longer. (Apple)

Teams listened to what individual members had to say.

Sometimes our contributions are minimal and others are substantial but you are still listening. (Plum)

This was because they value the different abilities of team members.

We understand that everybody's got the skills to offer and we listen to these people who've got the skills. (Apple)

Advice.

As well as sharing ideas in all three schools the teams were useful for sharing advice.

There's always somebody with some expertise you can go to and say can you help me. And everybody around this table will give up their time, (Plum)

It was perceived as a right of team membership and normal practice that advice would be offered freely.

I think everyone welcomes advice and support from everyone else. (Apple)

In these three schools the teams share ideas, give advice, listen and solve problems.

These activities facilitate the leadership practice taking place. As one leader said

So taking ideas and listening and being able to contribute and as I said earlier accepting others views. It is the fact you've recognised that that is the best way forward in your leadership role rather than come up with the best way yourself all the time. I think my team quite appreciate that. (Pear)

These are the activities in these schools carried out when working in teams that appear to make the sum of the contribution of individual team members add up to more than the individual parts.

- **Optimistic Leaders.**

Although leaders in these three schools brought a range of different skills and expertise to the table there were some personal characteristics of individuals that were common. These were important for ensuring the flow of leadership practice embedded in the activities identified above. The sub-categories below describe this optimism.

Positive Leadership

Leaders in these schools had a very positive and robust outlook.

You certainly work in a different way. You walk quicker, eat quicker. You change your lifestyle incredibly. You know what's expected so you keep rolling. (Plum)

This was expressed in one school as leading by example.

So we do it by example. If I can do it as a leader as well as a teacher I expect them to do the same. (Plum)

This positive outlook is characterised in the way that leaders are not complacent and always look for ways to make things better.

We had an excellent OfSTED and it's what can we do next to make it better? (Apple)

Change and flexibility.

In improving the education of children they recognised the need for change. In all three schools a characteristic of leaders was they enjoyed change.

But I just love change and I have a vision and the doer in me makes sure that vision gets implemented. I'm always constantly feeding and wanting to do more and more improving and bring about change which is great for the school and everything around it. (Pear)

Leaders did not see change as a threat.

We are not frightened to try different things and different ways of doing things. (Plum)

Another aspect was that these leaders just liked variety.

*2 I like the fact that it's never the same, that it's always different.
5 You could stay in a year group for 10 years, but each year would be different. (Apple)*

A characteristic of change was that leaders recognised the need to be flexible to changes in the daily routine.

There's a flexibility with everyone. This is one of the key things in the school. (Pear)

In one school it appeared that difficulties in staffing and the budget meant that leaders regularly had to be flexible and alter their leadership arrangements.

I'm a year 6 teacher for the next, all last week and this week because of budgets and things. Budgets have a huge impact on our flexibility. And it seems that in our management days were are doing PM observations and like today poor Ian came to find there was no cover allocated at the moment and he's already made a commitment to two staff. So we had to juggle around and try and find cover for him to do his performance management. Aspects you can't do outside the normal day to ensure that they happen. (Plum)

Within teams, leaders recognised that it was occasionally necessary to change plans and agenda because of unforeseen priorities.

You know, you've got your agenda, but that agenda can change, because somebody might bring something to the meeting and actually you realise that this needs to be discussed. (Apple)

It was also seen as important that leaders were seen to be flexible so that others would be when necessary.

It also shows that we are all quite adaptable. We have a go at doing everything. And if we are adaptable the staff will feel that if we have ago they will as well. (Plum)

Self Confidence.

This positive outlook and robust attitude to change and flexibility was due in part to the confidence of leaders. In all three schools leaders had confidence in their ability to do the job.

I know John has got all his bases covered, everything covered, we are the best people for the job. (Apple)

As well as this inner confidence, leaders derived confidence from the support of individual members.

She gave me that confidence that I could go back and ask her if I needed more help. (Plum)

As well as the support of the whole team. One new member of staff expressed it as:

As a new comer after Easter it was scary but I've grown in confidence more and more. (agreement to this from all) (Apple)

Experience

The reason for this confidence was the level of experience all leaders had.

There is a contribution of opinions with regard to anything for developing the school, uh, we are all experienced, we all have management skills of some type or other, (Plum)

In this same school experience was expressed in terms of knowledge and expertise.

Our widespread knowledge. We've got expertise in a few areas and we've got widespread knowledge over many areas. (Plum)

Leaders also valued the expertise of others in the team.

And we recognise their expertise I would go to Fred for maths (Apple)

They also benefited from the experience of others.

Because I'm new to the role it's nice to bounce ideas off people who have been here longer. (Apple)

It was recognised that leaders would be expected to learn from the experience of others.

And experience, we learn such a lot. (Apple)

Open and honest

In two of the schools it was perceived to be important that leaders were open and honest with others.

We are all pretty open and we trust each other (Pear)

Leaders were transparent in their interactions with one another.

There's no hidden agendas (Plum)

As well as openness in the interactions with others, an open attitude to new ideas was also important.

I think openness, being open to everything. So taking ideas and listening and being able to contribute and not being judgemental, keep an open mind and as I said earlier accepting others views. (Pear)

Sense of Humour.

A final characteristic was that in two schools leaders recognised that it was important to have a sense of humour.

A sense of humour, I think. I think that's really important, I really do. (Plum)

This was recognised by the researcher when observing the meetings and carrying out the focus group interviews. Laughter was a regular feature.

And we laugh a lot, (Apple)

In one school during the team meeting laughter occurred on sixteen occasions. This will be explained further later in this analysis. Laughter was recorded on nine occasions during the focus group interviews.

A teacher came to me today and said, oh aren't the year 3 getting to big for their boots and immediately ... laughter from all. (Pear)

In these three schools then leaders have a robust and positive outlook. This is characterised by confidence in their ability and experience to do the job and a sense of humour. They strive to improve and see change as inevitable, even enjoying it and demonstrate flexibility in their day to day behaviour. They are open in their interactions with others and lead by example. One leader summed most of these characteristics up in the following way.

Experience, skills and forward thinking and dynamic people, very different in our characters. (Pear)

These characteristics would seem to compliment those exhibited by head teachers and explained in the concept of autonomy and self sufficiency.

- **Individual Benefits of Team Membership.**

The final category in this concept identifies that in a number of ways the nurturing of leadership practice has many individual benefits for leaders. As identified in the description of this concept optimistic leaders value the team as a tool for achieving the common purpose of the school. This facilitates the team activity that enables leadership practice to take place. Finally the reciprocal effect of this leadership practice is that leaders gain personal benefits.

An overriding sentiment from the leaders in all three schools was that they gained pleasure from the work carried out in leadership meetings.

TB How do you feel about these meetings?

1 I like coming.

6 I quite enjoy it (Apple)

They gained a sense of achievement.

You get a greater sense of achievement from these meetings perhaps from what's happened during the week. (Plum)

Leaders in one school enjoyed the interface between the work of the leadership teams and disseminating to others.

I enjoy going back to my team after these meetings, I feel quite good, I actually enjoy, I tend to go back with my diary- And they know and they say what's (acting part) going, what are we doing, I actually really enjoy saying this is what we are going to be doing? (Pear)

Leaders found the meetings very motivational.

It's almost like being energised. (Pear)

In all three schools leaders felt empowered to take a lead which triangulates with the beliefs of the head teachers.

I think the thing about working here is that you are actually empowered to do it. (Apple)

They felt that it was good leadership from the head teacher to be empowered

And encouraged to make those sort of decisions. You know good leadership from above to allow you to do it. (Pear)

Leaders took their responsibility to lead in terms of being empowered by the head teacher very seriously.

And I sit here sometimes and think, oh, I'm being trusted with this big responsibility and when you go down all the things that have to be done and you think, oh gosh I'm responsible for that and sometimes you think ooh should I be sitting here sometimes, its nice, it's a nice feeling, proud, but also wow. (Pear)

In turn leaders see it as part of their role to empower other members of staff.

so we've looked at the curriculum say for KS2 and KS1, identified staff that are who would like to do some work on geography or history or science, and we've offered that opportunity. (Plum)

In one of the schools it was expected that all staff would take the opportunity to lead.

And that's part of our pay policy, part of our structure. That is what we expect. People to take on a post of responsibility but not be paid for it. (Apple)

Leaders in two schools also benefited from feeling that their contributions were valued by the team.

But we have a contribution to the management of the school. (Plum)

One leader felt that they had a right to be valued for the contribution they made.

And therefore what we have to say can be valued. And we feel it should be valued. And it is valued. (Plum)

This is reciprocated by valuing the contribution of others.

We are not precious about having to know and do everything. We are all prepared to listen to other people and take a back seat. (Apple)

These contributions were perceived as the individual skills and experience leaders had.

This was expressed by one leader as;

A mixed bag of goodies, (Pear)

Leaders benefited from the pleasure gained from leadership, being empowered to lead and feeling valued for their contribution to the school and the leadership teams.

The categories of team work being valued, team facilitation, optimistic leaders and team member benefits describe the concept of teams nurturing leadership practice. As well as this it is also apparent that the leadership of individuals is being nurtured. Leadership practice can be found in the activities described in team facilitation. It would not occur

though if individuals did not value the work of the team or derive any benefits from membership. Another contributing factor to the nurturing of leadership practice is the characteristic of optimism which seems to be common to all leaders in these three schools.

The Concept of Personal Interdependency.

The categories below describe the characteristics of the personal relationships and interactions between leaders. As well as the benefits described above which leaders gain from team membership it would appear that the personal relationships and interactions identified act as catalysts to the flow of leadership practice. In one school – Pear a short interview with two leaders gave a rich description of this concept which is why there are more quotations from this school.

- **Personal Relationships.**

The sub-categories below describe the characteristics of personal relationships.

Personal relationships are valued.

Leaders in all three schools thought that personal relationships were important.

And just to have a general chit chat with somebody to build that relationship with somebody, you know. (Pear)

In another school it was described as knowing team members well.

And because we know each other well I can go to which I do (Plum)

It was recognised in one school that the quality of the relationship could depend on the level of status, or perceiving that you had equal status to the other person.

We are at a level with each other and so we've never had that situation together. In terms of our teams we've not, (Pear)

It was deemed necessary to have a relationship which was different with members of your own team in order to maintain control.

The same as when I come to you, you can come to me. Our team do that with us as well. But then they know the difference between.....but with our teams they know exactly how far to go. (Pear)

Leaders in the same school recognised that team work was improved if personal relationships were strong.

There's no margin of we do or we don't, you definitely get it done, but the way you deliver that, I think some other people haven't got that

with their teams so that it can create not such a, I don't know, not such a working atmosphere maybe. (Pear)

Nurturing atmosphere.

The atmosphere created by these relationships was also identified as important in another school.

It was a lovely atmosphere with everybody pulling together. (Apple)

One aspect of this atmosphere is the fun element manifest in the laughter mentioned earlier in the concept of common purpose.

Jane was still standing by the guillotine when they arrived (Laughter from all). (Apple)

Another aspect of this atmosphere was that leaders were relaxed with each other and didn't feel at all threatened.

And it's always none threatening, we feel comfortable, we feel comfortable with each other. (Apple)

Friendship and Affection.

The relationships were described as friendships in all three schools.

I value their professional expertise and also their friendship. (Plum)

In two of the schools leaders described affection amongst each other as a characteristic of friendship.

*3 And I think we genuinely like each other.
6 We like each other. (Apple)*

These friendships appeared to develop over time and were based for two leaders on trust and respect.

The layers of respect and trust and openness that lead to friendship just really work don't they, for us. (Pear)

These two leaders recognised the need to ensure that friendship did not compromise their role as leaders.

And because we are professional they've never had to be a situation where. I suppose you could say perhaps if you are too friendly you can't deliver a hard message, (Pear)

It was also interesting to note that although these two leaders had a very strong and friendly relationship, they had never worked in the same teaching team or continued the friendship outside the workplace.

Yr3 And it's grown as well hasn't it because it's not like when we first, you know, It's not like out of school.

Yr5 No, No, we've never worked together in a year group, (Pear)

Intuition and Empathy.

These two teachers had an intuitive understanding of each other. They described it as follows.

I think that in terms of why it works perhaps we are on the same wavelength. (Pear)

In another school it was described as empathy.

We have an empathy for each other. (Plum)

The behaviour of the two leaders from Pear during the interview re-enforced this intuition. Some of these behaviours were identified when discussing common agreement above but they also describe the relationships between leaders. Regular eye contact was made with each other.

Yea, laughs, (Mutual eye contact smiles and warmth.) (Pear)

Often they nodded in agreement.

And respect each other, and we do respect each other, the experiences we both have are very different. (nods of agreement throughout this speech) (Pear)

On eight occasions in a ten minute interview one leader completed the sentence of another demonstrating that she was on the same wavelength.

Yr5 So we can have a quiet word together and say oh that's a bit tricky, how are we

Yr3 Going to cope with that?

Yr5 Yea (Nods of agreement)

Yr3 And we have that confidence to speak to each other on those terms and, cause we've done that when we've been on duty haven't we, and just had a quiet word about

Yr5 How we'd do that (nods) (Pear)

This type of sentence completion happened in all three schools and demonstrated the closeness of the relationships amongst leaders. There appeared to be two reasons why this intuitive sentence completion took place. The first was to show agreement with the point being made.

3 We are not frightened to try different things and different ways of doing things because.

1 We are not frightened of disagreeing. (Plum)

The second was to elaborate on the point being made. In this short dialogue four leaders take part.

*2 And actually our TLR meetings
5 They've been fabulous.
7 Since September they've been run
2 They've been every other week
6 And that's promoted understanding between phases
2 Absolutely
6 Because you tend to be in your own little box
2 And actually the children as well get a better deal because you know
what's going on throughout the school. (Apple)*

In the short interview with the two leaders from Pear there were occasions when they understood each other without speaking one was described in the concept of common purpose. Another demonstrates that eye contact and hand gesticulation was all that was needed to make a point with a colleague.

*Especially when it's a bit tricky, and we have that sort of and we have
that knowledge don't we that, well (hand gesticulation whilst making
eye contact) Irene's. (Pear)*

As well as the intuition that leads from these friendships there was sensitivity to the feelings of other leaders. This was apparent in all three schools.

*And we do care for one another. We are missing two key players
today, lets look at Jill, for example, we were disappointed she wasn't
here because she's been more involved in the travel plan, I've just
dipped into it. She rang last night at 6.00 and said my father is ill,
there was only one decision, she had to be there, and that's the type of
school we are. And it's that care and understanding. (Apple)*

One leader saw this sensitivity to people as an important characteristic of leadership.

*I think I've got the character of being quite bolshy, very sensitive
towards people so I can determine how to behave in the right
situation, (Pear)*

The mechanics of this sensitivity and how it linked to her ability to lead were described very well by another leader in the same school.

*I think its close observation you know, I think that's part of it. I know
for myself that I watch people really carefully, watch their reaction
and therefore judge my reaction to their reaction in order for me in a
way to not just get what I want but in order to get the best outcome if
you like and perhaps you do the same (nods of agreement) so we are
both very conscious of each others reactions (Pear)*

In this category leaders identified relationships and friendship as important catalysts in the quality of leadership practice that takes place. The interactions that take place are intuitive. This intuition seems to act as a form of shorthand which allows the flow of leadership practice to be more efficient. The atmosphere created nurtures leadership practice.

- **Characteristics of Personal Interactions.**

These relationships were based on some common characteristics identified in all three schools. The following sub-categories describe these characteristics.

Trust

Leaders valued the mutual trust they had for each other.

I think I'm a very people person, I love being around people. They can trust me, and they can trust me, come and talk to me about things. It wouldn't go any further, it wouldn't even go here and I just think that's what's really important. (Pear)

This trust meant that leaders could be more open than they may be with other colleagues.

I think, I think as well it's just like I am happy to be slightly vulnerable around Irene if you like. (Pear)

In one school a leader valued the trust of the head teacher.

If you have an idea and want to go with something John will trust you to go, (Apple)

This however was not the same as the mutual trust between colleagues that led to the benefits to team members described in the concept of team work being valued. For example one of the reasons that pleasure is gained from leadership is because of mutual trust between leaders.

*TB Do you get pleasure out of it?
Yr3 Yea, I enjoy working with Irene
Yr5 Yea, There is a trust we have of each other, (Pear)*

Respect

Another characteristic was mutual respect. This was identified in all three schools as important.

*Tb What's your opinion of why this team works successfully?
I I think we respect one another, (Apple)*

Leaders were respected for their skills, knowledge and experience. One leader articulated this respect as a privilege.

I feel privileged; I've learnt an awful lot from my team members. I feel very strong in early years. I've taught all the age ranges, but listening to everybody else keeps me up to date with year 6, 5, 4. (Plum)

Another leader valued being respected for her contribution in the following way.

You don't get shouted down if you make a mistake, (Apple)

Respect was such a strong characteristic that one leader had changed her job because she lacked respect for a colleague.

I wanted to move schools because I didn't really have any respect for the person I was working for really, I suppose that was the main thing. (Apple)

Leaders saw it as important to be respected by their teams and one way of gaining that respect was by having job credibility.

Yr3 I think in terms of all my team have seen me teach so they know that I can do it, they know how I am.

Yr5 They respect you for that, they've seen what you can do so when your telling them in a way (Pear)

In the same schools the relationships between leaders and other colleagues were described as having.

Layers of trust and respect. (Pear)

Support and Reassurance.

A final characteristic that was represented very strongly in all three schools was that of mutual support and reassurance. This was highly valued and referred to thirty four times during the interviews. This triangulates with the view of high levels of support that the head teachers identified in their schools. The schools generally had an ethos of support.

There is a general ethos of support within the school within year groups, within phases. (Apple)

This was exemplified in another school in the following way.

Everyone wants to help. The school production, it goes up on the board and it's full. The cross country team, everyone's out there watching it because you are supporting the children predominantly but also supporting the core people in that team. You support the adults as well as the children. (Pear)

Leaders also valued the mutual support of the head teacher.

And he listens to you and supports you, (Pear)

But he can't do that without the support of everybody else (Pear)

Leaders had benefited from support in a number of ways. Firstly in terms of expertise gained from others.

Go to if you get stuck. There's always somebody with some expertise you can go to and say can you help me. (Plum)

Secondly personal support at times of difficulty.

Through personal experience I've had a difficult time and they've been very, very supportive. It's a very good team. (Plum)

Thirdly mutual support when dealing with a shared problem.

But I think because of the support that we had from each other meant that we were able to discuss in the meeting but carry on as normal in our own teams, because you were supported properly with those issues at the time. So even when it became tricky we were supported so that meant it was ok is what I'm trying to say (Pear)

Fourthly support was in the form of mutual reassurance that a course of action is correct.

It's like a reassurance thing and then we'll go off and do it in our year groups, (Pear)

Finally support in sharing the workload.

We say what can we do to help you to ease your load, at the moment I've got a little bit of spare capacity, I can make some spare capacity because what you're doing is more important at the moment and you've got a priority coming up. (Plum)

The characteristics of mutual trust, respect and support were highly valued in all three schools. They appear to be the building blocks upon which the personal relationships and interactions described earlier are dependant on.

Summary of Concepts Identified in the Focus Group Interviews.

Focus group interviews

Concept	Categories	Sub-categories
5.Common Purpose	Common understanding	
	Institutional loyalty	
	Functional leadership	School size
		Communication
		Support the head teacher
		Monitoring and evaluation
	Team accountability	

6.Nurturing Leadership Practice	Team work being valued	
	Team facilitation	Problem solving
		Sharing ideas
		Advice
	Optimistic leaders	Positive leaders
		Change and flexibility
		Self confidence
		Experience
		Open and honest
		Sense of humour
	Team member benefits	
7.Personal Interdependency	Personal relationships,	Personal relationships are valued
		Nurturing atmosphere
		Friendship and affection
		Intuition and empathy
	Characteristics of interpersonal relationships	Trust
		Respect
		Support and reassurance

The concept of common purpose compliments the beliefs exemplified by head teachers and creates the environment for all forms of leadership and helps to explain why these schools are so successful. Within this concept opportunity for leadership practice as manifest in groups of leaders can be identified. The next concept of teams nurturing leadership practice identifies the activities and characteristics of teams and leaders in which leadership practice takes place. It is clear that leadership plus and leadership practice as stretched over individuals is nurtured here. The value that leaders have in team practice is because they know it is a successful tool in these schools for ensuring the work gets completed. The final concept of interpersonal relationships identifies how the leadership practice is refined. The quality and flow of practice is determined by the interpersonal relationships of leaders. The building blocks of these relationships are the mutual characteristics described by leaders.

4. Analysis of the Leadership Meetings.

In this section of the analysis I will describe the range of verbal behaviour types that were identified during the three leadership meetings recorded. Each of these meetings was organised around an agenda with the head teacher acting as chair. The analysis will focus on the sections of the meeting in which the researcher recognised that leadership practice was taking place. During the other parts of the meeting leadership practice was not evident. These parts centred on leader plus aspects during which one person took the lead and others listened or only contributed to the activity by asking questions for clarification. These leader plus parts of the meeting were made up of the following types of activity:

- Reporting to the meeting by leaders on areas they were responsible for.
- Giving information about future events.
- Giving advice.
- Information sharing about initiatives.
- Information sharing about courses or correspondence.
- Questioning for clarification.

Leadership plus parts of the meeting took up the majority of the time. The meeting at Pear lasted for one hour and fifty minutes. Leadership practice aspects the researcher recorded lasted for eight minutes. The meeting at Plum was one hour in length and leadership practice aspects lasted for six minutes. The meeting at Apple was one and a half hours in length and the leadership practice aspects lasted for fifteen minutes. Leadership plus is well understood as it centres on the activities of individual leaders. The meeting gives these leaders the opportunity to communicate and share their activities with other leaders. The focus of this analysis will be on the leadership practice aspects of the meetings. In these three meetings leadership practice was identified when at least two members of the team became involved in discussion or debate. These debates were centred on the following activities. In Pear three scenes of practice were recorded:

- A colleague confirms the views of another colleague re-enforcing common understanding and belief.
- Colleagues reach a common agreement.
- A team clarifies its understanding and future action over an issue.

At Plum two scenes of practice were recorded:

- The team solving a problem.
- Colleagues taking an idea, developing it, and agreeing on future action.

At Apple four scenes of practice were recorded:

- Colleagues taking an idea, developing it, and agreeing on future action.
- Colleagues discussing a situation and coming to a common understanding of it which informs future planning.
- Team problem solving.
- Team debate over future action in which there are a range of opinions.

Within these three meetings there were many similarities between the types of activities listed above which will be described when identifying the types of verbal behaviour. These types of behaviour will be referred to as concepts. Within these concepts are categories of activity that make up the behaviour. As well as these verbal behaviours there were physical characteristics. However, these were identified and described in the last section of the analysis and any further description here would be merely repetition. Leadership practice was identified as lasting much longer in the meeting at Apple. The effect of this in the following description is that there will be a greater proportion of examples from this school to support concept description.

The diagram below gives a summary of the concepts identified in this section.

Team meeting observations

Concept	Categories
8.Activity Structure	Activity openers
	Activity development
	Activity strategy
	Activity resolution
9.Verbal Strategies	Opinions
	Interruptions
	Intuition
	Support
	Humour

The Concept of Activity Structure.

In most leadership practice activities there was an identified structure that was common to all three schools. The following four categories will describe this structure.

- **Activity Openers.**

In the activities listed above one leader took the responsibility to introduce the item. These tended to be the longest speeches in leadership practice which is characterised by many short verbal interactions. If the activity involved a problem to be solved this would be explained by one leader.

Yea, what happens to Ian is (looks to Ian) he chairs a faculty meeting on the same week as KS2 he can only have it with year 1 and year 2 which means your loosing some of your colleagues. (HT, FS nods in understanding) So that's, that's the dilemma with that particular faculty, maybe there's something else we could do. (Nods to listen to HT interruption) (Plum).

Another type of activity was the development of a new project which one leader would introduce.

Well I think regardless of if there's any reward at the back of my mind I've been thinking that the next curriculum initiative really we've got to get a handle on this sustainability. (Apple).

Leadership practice also involved the review of existing practice and was introduced by the leader responsible for it so that it could be discussed by leaders before decisions about future practice were made.

I was hoping really that tonight we could have a look at the reports, I mean maybe there isn't time, I was hoping we could have a quick look at the report format. And see what needed changing. (Apple).

Another activity opener was informing leaders about proposed future activity in order to encourage comment or suggestion.

Yes, uh I just really wanted to share with you foundation I um, new uniform ideas that we've brought on this year, um that's our logo. (Apple).

A final opener was a leader seeking advice from colleagues about future action.

So do you think that there's a sort of development from this, just out of the top of my head, the thought that we think about a focus and I say go and look at (Pear)

These openers were all well understood conventions that invited the participation of other colleagues.

- **Activity Development.**

Throughout the rest of the activity the opener was worked on by leaders before a resolution was reached. These developments can be categorised in the following way. Leaders would add to the activity opener giving a personal perspective. In a discussion about pupils needing internet access at home one leader makes the following comment.

(At the same time) There's one in my maths group who could do with it. He hasn't got access. (Apple)

Although this does not develop the idea it shows support for it which is an important characteristic to be described later. Leaders in all schools widened the scope or perspective of the activity opener. This was a strong feature of all leadership practice activities.

I'd also suggest that it links to maths with measuring, (Plum)

Often this widening of scope came in the form of a rhetorical question. For example whilst discussing internet access for pupils one leader makes the following comment.

And how much of that is used for playing? (Apple)

This widening of perspective ensures the leaders gain the full scope of the activity through the sharing of contributions from all colleagues.

What about alternate sources of energy? In the future we could think of..... is it Cherry school? (Apple)

The activity was also developed by brainstorming of ideas.

DH (returns to assembly idea) But also the Monday assembly after that, what is that, the 19th March could it work for the merit assembly. Could we feed back from the science week and showing examples of the work?

HT Merit science.

DH Yea merit science OK. (Plum)

This brainstorming was characterised by short interruptions as a leader got an idea and immediately wanted to share it.

HT So at the next meeting we'll (nods from Yr3 and Yr6) have a think, right.

Yr5 Display (look from Yr3) (Pear)

Leaders often built on each others ideas during this brainstorming. In this extract leaders are developing the idea of a sustainability project.

ECM And that links to ECM and dealing with global issues.

IT And the international.... Dimension as well so that's going to be
HT Um
HC But I think in terms of it being a big whole school project we
could, we could even have a wider view than, than looking at the
curriculum and looking at paper recycling and all of this, um.
HT Couldn't agree more.
HC What about alternate sources of energy, in the future we could
think of... .. Is it Cherry school?
KS2 (interrupts) There are schools
HC who have got um
ECM A windmill
ALL Confirming nods and comments
KS2 On a pole, and solar panels. (Apple)

Four leaders contribute to the development of this idea. This is not formal brainstorming, but a recognised strategy used here which allows these leaders to make contributions that are valued and widen the scope of the activity. It was also noticed that the three head teachers in all leadership practice activities made minimal contributions which was in contrast to the other sections of the meeting where they took the lead. This example clearly shows how leadership practice adds up to more than the sum of its individual parts. One leader may have been able to develop this idea, but not in the 5 seconds this extract lasted nor would he or she have known that the idea was supported by other leaders.

Another strong feature in developing the activity was that leaders would add personal knowledge to the issues being discussed.

No, what, what was interesting was from the survey we did about 98%
do have a computer at home, (Apple)

One purpose of this was to confirm the contribution last made.

(Eye contact Yr5) And previously it's been put into their success
profiles hasn't it. (Pear)

Another purpose would be to support an opinion.

It needs to be I think because some parents have a lot of children. I
think we've got. (Plum)

Knowledge was also used when a leader wanted to make a point that was not necessarily in agreement with the last contributor.

HC The library in Apple is pretty good now.
IT The library is pretty good, but we've got over 10,000 books now.
(Apple)

A development that was less frequently observed was that of observations made by a leader to the issue being discussed. This example comes from the review of a school report format.

*DH I mean that's the only thing I think you can change, if you going to build any
KS2 It reduces the teachers comments. (Apple)*

Developments were also identified as responses to the last comment which confirmed the value of the idea.

*HT (speaks to resolve poster, booklet idea) Why don't you take both ideas and have just have a science week programme. You know, a little book, to fold over, what ever, which is like a, as well as a poster, because its no more work to produce the events,
HT but in a child's way so that parents take it home.
AHI'll ask them (Plum)*

Most responses of this sort were either one or two words which gave support to the development being put forward.

Yea, Yea. (Pear)

Although they weren't developments in themselves they acted like oil in an engine allowing the flow of ideas by layering support. Support will be described in more detail later.

Most of the responses of this type were by individuals, but there are some examples of joint responses from all leaders.

*IT Only about 40%, 40% the child has their own computer.
All Yes, yes. (Apple)*

This category of activity development was entwined with the next category of activity strategy.

- **Activity Strategy.**

This happened regularly throughout the activities. It describes courses of action leaders proposed to take from development of an idea. This did not happen at the end of leadership practice activity but randomly throughout the discussions. It can be characterised as follows. At some point in the discussion someone would decide what they thought should happen next.

One for 1, 2 and 3. So we've just, so Mr Door can do 1, 2 and 3, Mr Knob can do 4,5 and 6. (Plum)

Many times this would just be a decision to continue the discussion at the next meeting.

So at the next meeting we'll (nods from Yr3 and yr6) have a think, right. (Pear).

On a few occasions more than one leader came to a joint decision about the course of action to take.

HC And if they could then E mail Jean, I think if, we haven't got leadership next week have we?

HT No

DHT The 3, 3 of us can meet.

HC Well, if 3 of us meet next week, get it, and just have a glance at it, sort it out, and E mail it to Fred, you know, he's got it and he can start working on it straight away. (Apple)

Very often the action to take was offered as a proposal for others to consider. These statements tended to be questions to the meeting.

Wouldn't it be better to come after the week I think when they've actually got something to show what they've actually done? (Plum)

In one school the meeting was used for leaders to explain the strategy for future action to others so that modifications could be suggested if necessary.

And Alison and Jennifer work together and, as in a couple of weeks time we'll be opening the library and the ICT suite after school for an hour and a half on a Tuesday evening for, for family learning using the library books. (Apple)

Sometimes the meeting was asked for a decision on the suggested course of action.

SEN And what you focus is going to be for each day.

HT Yea, or no?

All Confident yes. (Plum)

Occasionally suggesting a course of action was used as a way of clarifying the decision of the meeting. This ensured that everyone understood what was being said.

So all you've got to do is look at a box for PHSE. (Apple)

It was also important that the group agreed to the strategy that was suggested. Most suggested courses of action required a response.

HT Do that on the but not as big. Well why don't we just say the whole week then?

All Yea.

HT And in the book if the times are there.

All Yea. (Plum)

- **Activity Resolution.**

Once the first three categories were completed to the satisfaction of the leaders at the meeting the item being discussed would be brought to a close.

Ok, can we continue to look at that. (Apple)

In all resolutions it was the head teacher who brought the item to a close. This is not surprising as they had taken on the role of chair at these meetings.

One head teacher used this opportunity to inject some humour into the meeting.

*HT I'd like to see this water pump at the front.
All Laughs. (Plum)*

Occasionally the head teacher introduced a compromise in order to bring an item to resolution.

*(speaks to resolve poster, booklet idea) Why don't you take both ideas
and have just have a science week programme. (Plum.)*

The head teacher in one school tried to bring items to resolution on three occasions but was ignored and the discussion continued.

*HT We'll discuss it again.
FS (interrupts) If you think about it in assembly when we come in.
(Apple)*

Head teachers would occasionally bring an item to a close in order to ensure that the decision being made about future action was delayed. This strategy ensured that no decision was made that he or she was in disagreement with. This avoided the head teacher having to take an authoritarian stance which would have undermined the leadership practice.

*HT Sooner rather than later this year and it might well be that we
delay it to 08 but lets
All (Indecipherable debate for 5 seconds). (Apple)*

If the item being discussed did not need action to be taken, for example in one school the discussion was about coming to a common understanding, then the resolution statement just clarified that.

*(Eye contact and nods to Yr5) Yea because they understand it don't
they. (Pear)*

These four categories then describe the concept of activity structure. Although the tone at the meetings was informal all items involving leadership practice took this form. An activity opener followed by activity development and strategy and finally activity

resolution. Leaders in these meetings also had a number of verbal strategies they used to contribute to the meeting. These will be described in the following concept.

The Concept of Verbal Strategies.

The following five categories describe the strategies that leaders used in meetings. All five strategies were observed in all three meetings.

- **Opinions.**

An important aspect of all discussions involving leadership practice was that leaders felt able to give their opinion.

(Eye contact with Yr3) I think it needs to be more child friendly as well for the children. (Pear)

Often this could be done quite forcibly in order to get the point across.

*HT So you are confident they are being used.
Yr3 Yea I certainly am. (nods) (Pear)*

Another strategy used to get the point across was to repeat the statement a number of times to ensure the leader had been understood.

*FS Oh that's an idea a faculty booklet.
AH (at the same time) It needs to go out on, on March the 9th.
FS (to get AH attention) Alison that would be a good idea a faculty booklet.
AH It needs to be I think because some parents have a lot of children. I think we've got.
FS Yea.
HT OK.
FS (same time) faculty booklet.
HT Times 3.
FS Yes.
FS Faculty booklet. (Plum)*

Another strategy used was to repeat the last person statement in order to give force to an opinion.

*KS2 It reduces the teachers comments.
DH It reduces the teachers comments, cause the teachers comment was supposed to include PSHE. (Apple)*

Leaders would also use the discussion to develop an opinion clarifying it for themselves and others.

Yr5 because it is always much different, but I suppose it's not in black and white on a sheet of paper when they see it.

*Yr3 (Eye contact with Yr5) Oh. OK Its.
(Looks to HT) If its on the paper its like (shock expression). You can have the conversation and you can make them feel better when you're saying but this is in place and this is what we're doing about it. When they actually see it on a bit of paper, and very, I do worry about it, about parents who don't actually understand it. They look at it and they see all these numbers and. (Pear)*

Leaders had the confidence to give opposing opinions during the discussion. These were not perceived as undermining, but were valued.

*DH I mean people were thinking of red polo shirts.
HC Clashes.
HT (at same Time) um this is one, this is one criticism.
DH Clashing, but its not they're multicoloured you see. (Apple)*

Occasionally leaders would give an opposing opinion without it wanting to appear that they were disagreeing. The quote below is an example, but it is in the tone of voice used where others pick up the signal.

*HT So at the next meeting we'll (nods from Yr3 and yr6) have a think, right.
Yr5 Display (look from Yr3)
HT Or something.
YR5 Or something (eye contact with HT picks up that he has another topic in mind for monitoring) (Pear)*

Another strategy was to completely ignore the opinion that had just been given. This did not appear to give any offence but was accepted as part of the flow of conversation.

*SEN (as HT is talking) I think the parents of children come in as well.
AH Well do you want a main booklet? (Plum)*

AN important aspect of giving an opinion was to get a response which helped to gauge the level of support there was to the idea.

*HT I think that one of the next things is tidiness. (nod and smile from yr5, nods from Yr3 and Yr6) I think that there is a slight lessening of the tidiness that we've known.
Yr3 And to be honest, I have been going on about that now. (Pear)*

This response could be given by an individual.

*HT (returns to booklet issue) A little booklet telling the parents what's going on.
AH A little booklet for pupils and parents yea. (Plum)*

Or by a group.

*Well alright we'll have a look at that we'll come back to that.
(Affirming nods from Yr3,5 &6) (Pear)*

The strategy of opinions then gave leaders a tool to develop the activity or strategy described above and was used by all leaders during each episode of leadership practice recorded.

- **Interruption.**

All discussions were characterised by regular interruptions. This did not appear to cause any offence or concern. It was a strategy used that was not perceived to be impolite as it may be considered generally in society.

FS Yes, uh I just really wanted to share with you foundation I um, new uniform ideas that we've brought on this year, um that's our logo
KS2 (interrupts) That's nice.
Fs if you were aware of it. (Apple)

There were many reasons for these interruptions. Interruptions would be used to move a discussion forward.

HT You know it, humph, could create.
Yr5 (Interrupts turning to look directly at Yr3 teacher) Did your year not do that in the end? (Pear)

A second reason was to add another dimension to the idea being discussed.

AH So it's just a little booklet.
SEN (interrupts) And is one year group doing assembly? (Plum)

Another reason was to interrupt to ask a question.

FS We decided to have purely for foundation, different colours, and I just brought a selection of sweat shirts, but I can't take them out of the bags.
HC (interrupts) Can staff have one as well? (Apple)

Interruptions were also used by leaders to disagree with the last statement made.

6 Could they be allowed to use their polo shirts as they go up the school as.
HT (Interruption Anticipates, makes cutting gesture) No categorically. (Apple)

Interruptions were not always sequential. Sometimes leaders appeared to have thought over an earlier statement before interrupting.

DH I think that would be nice some focus for that week.
HT (interrupt to return to booklet issue) A little booklet telling the parents what's going on. (Plum)

There were many occasions when a leader tried to interrupt but failed.

HT One of the down sides, one of the down sides is you really don't see a distinct difference if it's a down side or an up side in school, between the rest of the school and foundation 2 who will be all this mix of colours but.

FS (tries to interrupt) I think

DH (interrupts HT) I think that's good that you can identify these young ones. (Apple)

On over thirty occasions the interruption came in the form of one leader holding a conversation with someone else whilst a third leader was trying to make a point.

FS That's what I see as the real good thing about it that it would see, it would unify the foundation a lot more.

HC (whilst FS speaking) If the parents don't like it

HT (whilst FS speaking) right, right. (Apple)

Interruptions occurred spontaneously normally in response to leaders having an idea that they did not feel obliged to wait to share. The familiarity and relationships between leaders meant that this did not appear to cause any problems and actually aided the flow of activity.

- **Intuition.**

Intuition has been described earlier as a characteristic of the interpersonal relationships between leaders. In these meetings it is used as a form of shorthand. It saves leaders a lot of time explaining issues already understood because they tended to be on the same "wavelength". There were a number of intuitive interruptions of this kind.

Yr5 (nods in confirmation as Yr3 makes last statement). Yea I'm certain they are being used in all books, (points to emphasise next point – slows slightly) but not all the time. So it's going back to deciding whether they are to be used all the time. (Looks at Yr3 colleague as queue to speak, yr6 teacher also nods in response)

Yr3 It's almost as if someone's marking, they've not got. (Pear)

In one school intuition was used to agree to a point before it was stated.

FS Does it matter that we don't

HT No, no, no. (Apple)

There were also intuitive interruptions to give an opinion.

DH So that's, that's the dilemma with that particular faculty, maybe there's something else we could do. (Nods to listen to HT interruption)

HT (interrupts) What we could do is try a longer merit assembly. (Plum)

A characteristic of the close interpersonal relationships between some leaders was that a gesture was all that was needed to intuitively show agreement for a statement.

Yr5 (eye contact with Yr3) because if we are talking about giving merits and certificates it would be nice for the children to show what level they are at.

Yr3 (Eye contact with year 5) And it gets, (Open hand gesture in support of Yr5 colleague) (Pear).

The types of intuition described above were expressed in a number of ways. As described when analysing the focus group interviews leaders could intuitively complete the statements of colleagues.

DH I think its

HT It's been slow starting. (Apple)

As with the focus groups there was intuitive sentence completion.

Yr3 I mean some are really uhm

Yr5 (Eye contact and nods to Yr3) Good.

Yr3 Eye contact and nods to Yr5) Yea because they understand it don't they. (Pear)

Finally leaders would say the identical phrase at the same time as other speakers to signify intuitive agreement or understanding.

FS I mean presently they wear them with their own clothes.

DH (at same time)

With their own (Apple)

The category of intuition then triangulates with the description of intuition and empathy given in the focus group interviews. Behaviour illustrated the belief of leaders. The same behaviours identified in those interviews were not unsurprisingly repeated in the team meetings. The next category also illustrates the belief that leadership meetings were very supportive.

- **Support.**

This was a very important aspect of these meetings. Leaders were expected to give support and also to seek support. On fifty four occasions leaders gave another colleague support.

I think it's brilliant. (Plum)

This on most occasions was in terms of a single word or short phrase.

HT And I am concerned, particularly protection for yourselves the data

Yr 5 (Nods)

HT between what we found at KS1 SAT level

Yr3 Yea

Yr6 (Nods)

HT and the data that we have, does not match.

Yr3 Exactly (Pear)

Most support was to show agreement to the last idea or statement.

FS Now this is foundation 1, this is foundation as well, we only really started to be offered to parents after Christmas.

HT After Christmas. (Apple)

Occasionally a supportive statement did not add to the discussion but merely stated the obvious.

The benefit to the child can be as big or small as you want it to be. (Apple)

The support was sometimes a way of signifying that leaders understood the point that was being made.

DH Yea, what happens to Ian is (looks to Ian) he chairs a faculty meeting on the same week as

KS1 (leans in to DH) Yep (Plum)

Occasionally support was given to encourage another leader to continue with a course of action.

FS Yes, uh I just really wanted to share with you foundation 1 um, new uniform ideas that we've brought on this year, um that's our logo.

KS2 That's nice. (Apple)

Support was also used to help to emphasise the opinion of another leader.

DH I mean you are going to look at them at your phase meeting.

HC It's probably easier to look at them then. (Apple)

Very often the support given was from the whole meeting.

ECM A windmill.

ALL (Confirming nods and comments) (Apple)

This very often confirmed the value the group felt for individual contributions and triangulates well with the belief leaders had in the support of these meetings.

- **Humour.**

This final category again supports the belief that leaders had that they enjoyed these meetings. Humour was often injected into the meetings.

HT On a Monday? That's when I take it, (laughter supported by FS and KS1) (Plum).

It was often the same leader in each meeting that initiated humour. In one school it was the deputy head teacher.

*DH You don't shout at them quite so loud.
All (Laugh) (Apple)*

The response to humour on all occasions was laughter either by an individual or the whole group. This is illustrated in the two quotations in this category. Humour did not appear to slow the meeting or detract from the issues being discussed. Laughter appeared to offer brief interludes between concentrated activities which helped to maintain the positive lively atmosphere which was a characteristic of all these meetings.

Summary of Concepts Identified in the Team Meetings.

Team meeting observations

Concept	Categories
8. Activity Structure	Activity openers
	Activity development
	Activity strategy
	Activity resolution
9. Verbal Strategies	Opinions
	Interruptions
	Intuition
	Support
	Humour

The first concept of activity structure gives a description of the pattern of leadership practice activities in these three meetings. The second concept identifies and describes the types of verbal strategies leaders employ within these meetings to interact with each other. Some of these strategies could not work effectively without the close personal relationships described in the focus group interviews.

Summary of Research Findings.

The research has identified a range of concepts to describe and answer the questions identified in the literature review. These are in two sections.

1. Organisational support for distributed leadership.
 - How does situation effect distributed leadership?
 - Do head teachers take a contingent stance when leading?
 - How do schools increase leadership capacity?

The concepts of Autonomy and self sufficiency, contingency, empowerment and accountability identified in the head teacher interviews help to answer these questions. This is triangulated in the focus group interviews in the concept of common purpose

2. Value added distributed leadership - The characteristics and behaviour of leaders.

- Is it possible to identify the interactions that take place in leadership practice that lead to value added distributed leadership?
- Are the interpersonal characteristics of influence and intuition an important contributory aspect to successful distributed leadership?

The concepts of nurturing leadership practice and personal interdependency identified in the focus interviews help to answer the question about interpersonal characteristics and also identify some interactive behaviour when leadership practice takes place. The concepts of activity structure and verbal strategies triangulate with the first concepts and also give a more detailed description of the interactions in play when leadership practice takes place.

I will now use these research findings to reach conclusions about whether the distributed leadership theory explained in the literature review can be applied to large primary schools aspiring to be learning communities. I will use these conclusions to construct a model for distributed leadership which could be successfully applied to large primary schools aspiring to be learning communities.

Chapter Four.

Conclusions and Proposals.

The conclusions to this research will be divided up into three sections:

1. An evaluation of the reliability and validity of the research.
2. An evaluation of the theory of distributed leadership discussed in the literature review when compared against the research findings.
3. A proposed model of distributed leadership which could be applied to very large primary schools that aspire to being learning communities.

1. An evaluation of the reliability and validity of the research.

In the methodology section I identified the criteria for trustworthiness and authenticity proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as appropriate for judging the validity and reliability of this research. I will first judge the research against the four criteria for trustworthiness which are:

- credibility
- transferability
- dependability
- confirmability.

I will follow this with an evaluation of the authenticity of the research.

▪ credibility.

In order to judge the credibility of the research two areas need accounting for. The first is that the research instruments were examples of good practice and the second is that the respondents validate the research. Bryman (2004) points out that this is important for the findings to be accepted by others where there can be several possible accounts of an aspect of social reality.

In terms of good practice the semi-structured interviews with the three head teachers used a model explained in the methodology and practised by me in an earlier assignment. I was aware that one of my weaknesses was to become involved in the interview which towards the end turned them into a discussion with my contributions becoming longer. This did not happen in these interviews. The main difficulty was keeping the head teachers to the areas under discussion which involved using questions to keep them on course. An advantage when carrying out these interviews was my knowledge of the subject and familiarity with headship This meant that I was able to

take points made by the head teachers and ask further questions that allowed me to drill down and gain a rich picture of the situation in school. In order to gain an accurate understanding of distributed leadership it could be argued that by only interviewing the head teacher individually the perspective would be narrow. In response I would argue that the purpose of the head teacher interviews was to gain an understanding of the context, situation and leadership style of the head teacher. The head teacher in school is best placed to give me that perspective. The other research techniques allowed for their perspective to be triangulated. A weakness in these interviews was in the quality of recording. This meant that some language was indistinct and very difficult to transcribe. This was not the case when using the other two research techniques where the quality of sound on the video taken was better, allowing for more accurate transcription.

The team meetings used a research observation method that involved semi-structured observation informed by discourse analysis. I had to adapt these techniques in order to collect the data I needed for analysis. A simple structured observation technique would not have worked as I did not have a behaviour schedule I could use before observing the meetings, nor would behaviour alone have been enough as the language used was of enormous value when analysing the data. The knowledge of discourse analysis enabled me to code the language to identify behaviour traits. I did not use methods of discourse analysis coding which were too complicated for this research. This could be seen as a weakness of the research, but I was able to identify concepts based on common patterns of behaviour in each team meeting which would suggest that the coding used was reliable. The most important aspect of analysing this data was the decision to film the meetings. Personal observation would not have given an accurate picture of what was happening in the meetings. Filming meant that I was able to analyse the meetings by focusing on each team member in turn transcribing their behaviour and language. It also meant that I could identify the parts of the meeting where leadership practice activity rather than leadership plus activity was taking place.

I was able to identify some weaknesses in this research technique. First, I had to restrict my research to leaders who generally had formal leadership positions in school. This was due to the time I had available for research. Although this gave me an accurate picture of how leaders carried out their work in these schools, it only gave me limited access to the informal leadership of others based on the perspective of the head teacher

and those involved in the meeting. In future research in this area it would be useful to find out if the concepts identified here are recognised at all levels in school. However, I feel able to arrive at a model of distributed leadership for very large primary schools based on my findings. The strength of using video also created a weakness. The camera had to be positioned in one place, and I sat to observe in another. When analysing the film it was easier to see the faces and behaviour of those sitting opposite the camera. Introducing another camera would have solved this problem, but would have also made it very complicated and intrusive to the meeting. Bryman (2004) identifies that when people are being observed there is sometimes “social desirability” which is where participants alter their behaviour in response to perceived needs of the observation. This was seen during these observations. In the initial part of the meeting participants were quite formal and aware of the camera. After a few minutes however, participants relaxed and became more natural. I would be incorrect to say that they completely disregarded the observation after this. One leader remarked after the observation.

I mean we've kept more to the agenda than we do normally, we've kept more to the agenda points instead of going off at a tangent. (Apple)

This means that there was an element of social desirability running throughout the meetings. As can be seen from the research findings however, when engaged in leadership practice quite natural behaviours were identified which were not altered because of the observation.

The focus group meetings involving the participants from the leadership team successfully enabled data to be collected about capacity, interpersonal skills and interactions. The semi-structured technique used meant that there was the flexibility for participants to enlarge on issues that were important to them. It was easy to keep control of the meeting because participants were mostly in agreement with each other over the issues discussed. Filming was very important for the reasons discussed above, but there were the same weaknesses involved with this that have already been described. It is interesting to note that the ground rules for this sort of interview normally involve politeness about interruption. If this had been imposed a vital aspect of the reality of the interactions between participants would have been lost. I can appreciate the need for this rule in focus groups where participants are not familiar with each other, however here it was not necessary.

The research techniques used then were credible and designed to answer the specific research questions. Weaknesses were largely to do with improving the practice used to make accurate analysis of data easier.

It has been difficult to ascertain the level of respondent validation. It was agreed with the participants that I would send transcripts of the research for them to check if they felt they were accurate. It was also explained that they had ownership of this research. All transcripts and the research findings were E mailed to the schools on 2 June 2007 and automatic responses received ensuring schools had received them. Since then however I have had no response from the schools. The following reasons could explain this:

- Participants are too busy to spend time reading what were quite long pieces of text.
- The research carried out was not valued and therefore not read.
- The transcripts and research findings were read and participants were happy that they were a true account of the interviews and observations.

Whatever the reason no school has contacted me to question the findings or question the validity of what has been recorded. I feel able to cautiously conclude that the research has credibility on the information I have available.

▪ **Transferability.**

The research techniques have provided a rich data base of information about a range of concepts that describe distributed leadership in these three schools. The common themes identified in all three schools were a striking feature which could be argued would give the research conclusions transferability to other schools in similar contexts. However, as explained in the methodology only six schools in the country have similar criteria. This means that for the others because the criteria are not met the concepts identified may not be present. For example, in a very large primary school where leadership is judged to be unsatisfactory it will be unlikely that the concepts of common purpose and accountability will be replicated. What the research is able to do though is identify a successful model for distributed leadership from these three schools which could be adopted by others as a template for successful distributed leadership.

▪ **Dependability**

A full and accurate account of all research has been kept which includes; audio and video recordings, semi-structured interview and focus group schedules, transcripts and the coding analysis. This is available for audit if necessary. I am aware that it is impossible to make this research completely objective because I am combining qualitative techniques with my own understanding of the subject. This means that others could interpret aspects of the data differently. I have tried to apply trustworthiness tests of respondent validation and triangulation. I have explained that respondent validation has been inconclusive because of a lack of response. However, the research has shown that there is triangulation between the perceptions of head teachers and the participants in the focus groups. I feel that this gives a measure of dependability which makes this research trustworthy.

▪ **Confirmability.**

In terms of confirmability I have recognised that complete objectivity is impossible. I feel however that I have acted in good faith not allowing my own personal perceptions and theoretical understanding to sway the research. I would use the evidence of interaction and interpersonal relationships as an example. Although I was aware that this occurred, until I carried out the research I had no idea how it manifest itself. The analysis of the data was completely unbiased as I had no strong beliefs about what it would look like. Where I was more susceptible to bias was in analysing the situation and style of the head teacher because of my understanding of this role. However, I had no hypothesis, just questions to be answered and I was surprised by some of the concepts identified. For example, the importance of accountability for distributed leadership to be successful was a concept that the theory of distributed leadership had not elaborated on. For these reasons then I think that this research has an acceptable degree of confirmability.

▪ **Authenticity.**

The criteria associated with authenticity are related to the impact of the research on the participants. It is difficult to judge whether the research has had any impact for the reasons given above where no response has been received from the research schools. I have offered workshops to the schools, but this has not been taken up. Possibly because these schools have sophisticated leadership structures in place that have been proved to be successful. As explained in the methodology authenticity is associated with action research where it has the most powerful influence. I was not carrying out action

research but my understanding of distributed leadership as a result of the research will inform my work and judgements about leadership in future.

Summary.

The research is trustworthy when judged against the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Weaknesses have been identified that could be improved on if research was to be repeated. Authenticity is difficult to judge because of the lack of response from research schools. It is unlikely that the impact has been great on schools because of successful structures already in place. It will impact on the researchers work and the model for distributed leadership could impact on other schools in future.

2. An evaluation of the theory of distributed leadership discussed in the literature review when compared against the research findings.

In order to evaluate the theory of distributed leadership in the literature review against the findings of the research I will organise the conclusions under the following two sections. The sections incorporate the five research questions identified in the literature review. All key aspects of theory identified in the literature review will be incorporated into the relevant section.

1. Organisational support for Distributed leadership.
 - How does situation effect distributed leadership?
 - Do head teachers take a contingent stance when leading?
 - How do schools increase leadership capacity?
2. Value Added Distributed Leadership. The characteristics and behaviour of leaders.
 - Is it possible to identify the interactions that take place in leadership practice that lead to value added distributed leadership?
 - Are the interpersonal characteristics of influence and intuition an important contributory aspect to successful distributed leadership?

Before embarking on this evaluation I have listed below all the tables of concepts identified in the research in order to make the reading of the conclusions easier to follow. Concepts have been numbered and will be referred to by name and number in the text. The categories and sub-categories will be referred to by name and the concept number.

Head teacher interviews

Concept	Categories	Sub-categories
1. Autonomy and self sufficiency	A very strong sense of school identity and community.	
	A robust attitude to outside influences	
	Strong Leadership from the Head Teacher.	
	Compliance tools.	
2. Contingency	Visionary Leadership	
	Pragmatic Distribution	
	Pragmatic Recruitment.	
	Planned Leadership Structures	
3. Empowerment	Shared Ethos.	Learning about the school
	Support Structures.	Priorities for the structure
	Delegation.	
	A belief in the benefits of empowerment.	
4. Accountability	A belief in Accountability	
	A Culture of Accountability	

Focus group interviews

Concept	Categories	Sub-categories
5. Common Purpose	Common understanding	
	Institutional loyalty	
	Functional leadership	
6. Nurturing Leadership Practice		School size
		Communication
		Support the head teacher
		Monitoring and evaluation
	Team accountability	
	Team work being valued	
	Team facilitation	Problem solving
		Sharing ideas
		Advice
	Optimistic leaders	Positive leaders
7. Personal Interdependency		Change and flexibility
		Self confidence
		Experience
		Open and honest
		Sense of humour
	Team member benefits	
	Personal relationships,	Personal relationships are valued
		Nurturing atmosphere
		Friendship and affection
		Intuition and empathy
	Characteristics of interpersonal relationships	Trust
		Respect
		Support and reassurance

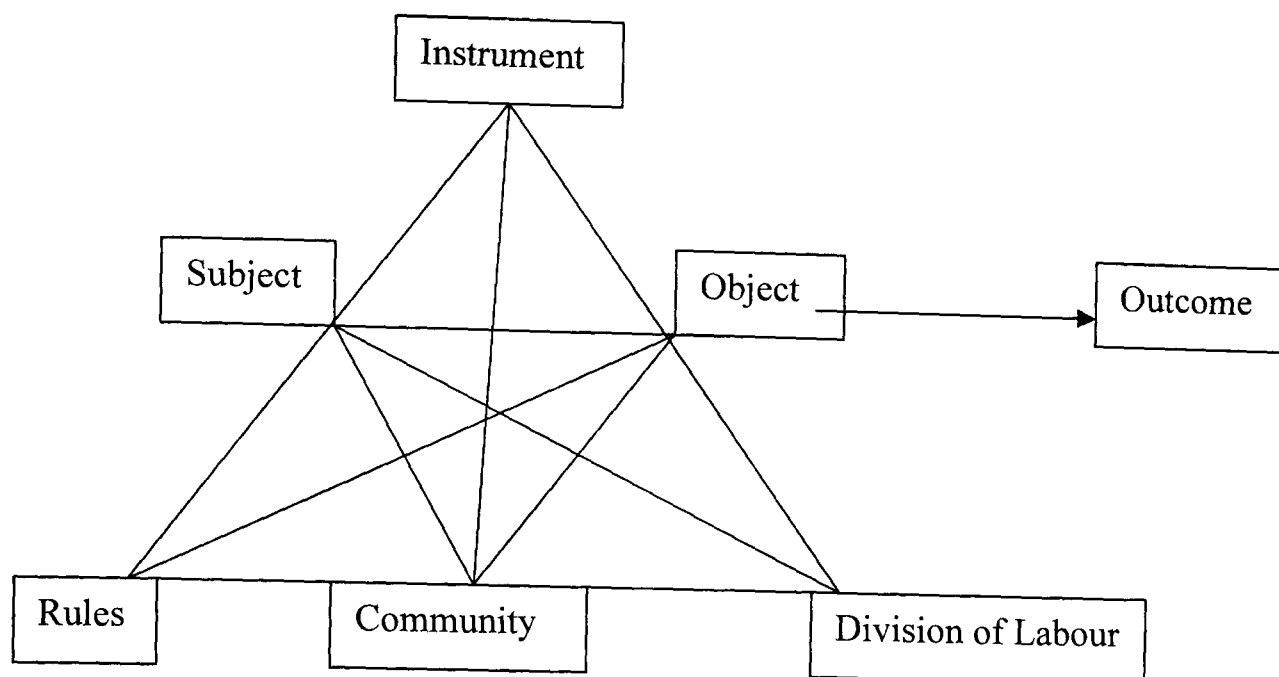
Team meeting observations

Concept	Categories
8. Activity Structure	Activity openers
	Activity development
	Activity strategy
	Activity resolution
9. Verbal Strategies	Opinions
	Interruptions
	Intuition
	Support
	Humour

Organisational support for Distributed leadership.

Spillane (2006) identifies that distributed leadership was dependant on school size, school type, subject matter and developmental stage. I enlarged developmental stage to include head teacher's development. In the categories of pragmatic distribution (2) and functional leadership (5) head teachers and leaders recognised that the size of the school means that the head teacher cannot carry out all leadership activity and that it is necessary to distribute it. The research shows that distributed leadership is not dependant on school size, but necessary for the effective leadership of the school. The research showed that like the projects discussed in the literature review distributed leadership takes place in all schools. All concepts identified in the head teacher and focus group interviews prove that elements of all MacBeath's (2005) six types of distributed leadership are present in the research schools. These encompassed leadership plus and leadership practice. Activity structure (8) and personal interdependency (7) gave evidence of the three bottom up categories identified (cultural, opportunistic and incremental distribution) which are associated with leadership practice. Concepts of contingency (2) and common purpose (5) gave evidence of the top down categories identified (formal, pragmatic and strategic) which are associated with leader plus activity. The research was unable to confirm the subject dependency of distributed leadership which was beyond its scope. The developmental stage of the schools and the head teachers were critical to successful distributed leadership in these schools. The concept of contingency (2) clearly showed that very experienced head teachers had spent many years honing there leadership and the effectiveness of the schools as learning communities and within this context distributed leadership was recognised by them as very important. All three head teachers recounted the difficulties they had experienced creating the structures and ethos they required in order for distributed leadership to be successful over a number of years. Rather than saying as Spillane does (2006) that distributed leadership is dependant upon the aspects discussed I would argue that the research shows that there is a symbiotic relationship between the schools context's and distributed leadership. The school provides the habitat or framework for distributed leadership, but cannot be fully effective without this form of leadership taking place.

Gronn (2003) identified the activity theory model below as a means of identifying the effect the situation had on distributed leadership.



Engeström (1999) provides this structure which shows the key components of activity.

The research showed that the subjects, objects and outcomes were very heavily influenced by the instruments, rules, community and division of labour that had been established by the head teacher in each school. It was because of this attention to these aspects that distributed leadership was successful. The instruments identified were accountability (4). There was also a very strong belief from the head teacher and other participants of the importance of empowerment (3) in these schools. The three schools were characterised by high levels of support and challenge. There was a belief in the importance of accountability from all participants (5, 4) as well as the head teacher. This concept is not recognised in the theory and research on distributed leadership that I am aware of, however it sits comfortably with the idea discussed in the literature review that leadership is distributed rather than distributive. It was definitely the head teachers by their actions that distributed leadership to others. In order to ensure that distributed leadership is a positive force for school improvement rather than a negative one as identified when discussing the research of Storey (2004) the head teacher needs to ensure consistency of practice through strong accountability instruments. Accountability here does not dictate activity or stifle creativity but ensures that leadership follows agreed school policy and protocols. Support structures ensured leaders had the physical capacity for their role by giving time and mentoring style support that was regarded as important by participants in the focus groups. This support became part of the ethos of the school and was freely offered at all levels in these schools. Teachers in these schools had very high expectations of themselves and each other but were very generous in the

support they gave to ensure success. Empowerment to take a lead was expected of all participants in all three schools. This was a major characteristic of leader plus activity and arose through delegation (3) to individuals and groups. Training appeared to be freely available to ensure that staff had the capacity for empowerment. It was expected by all participants and regarded as vital by head teachers to ensure consistency. The two concepts of empowerment and accountability are crucial to the success of distributed leadership. Leaders are given the capacity which enables them to lead dynamically and innovatively. In order to ensure that leaders are working to the common purpose (5) of the school robust systems of accountability are in place and are valued by all staff.

The schools had a comprehensive set of rules that have been identified as compliance tools (1). Head teachers were fully aware that the size and complexity of the schools meant that in order to ensure consistency staff needed to have policies etc. to follow. There was also a clear expectation appreciated by all participants that staff were responsible for ensuring they were familiar with the compliance tools.

The division of labour was very carefully planned in these schools and is described in the concept of contingency (2). Head teachers had planned their leadership structures over a number of years and had worked to achieve them. Leadership plus activity was pragmatically distributed by head teachers. Staff were recruited who were judged to fit the ethos of the organisation and also to have leadership potential. The idea that “leadership is seen as fluid and emergent” (Gronn, 2001) is not recognised in these schools. It may be that some leadership practice is spontaneous, fluid and emergent. However, this happens because a major investment has been made in these schools to carefully plan leadership structures that meet the needs of the school, putting in place instruments and rules to ensure its success. From this structure comes the opportunity for leadership practice. The three types of distributed division of labour identified by Spillane (2006) as division of labour, co-performance and parallel performance are all evident in these schools and are within the school descriptions section of the research findings.

Finally the community plays a major part in facilitating the success of distributed leadership in these schools. It was evident that the schools had a very strong identity

and community (1) and shared a common purpose (5). The schools were very dynamic, creative communities. Participants were passionate about learning and improving the quality of education they provided. They were aware of the success of their work but were not complacent. Participants were robust in their attitudes to outside influences (1) and were very loyal to the work of the school and the head teacher. The importance of this common purpose is not recorded in the theory and research identified. I think the passion shown by these professionals for school improvement is a strong motivational force in the success of distributed leadership in these schools.

These four elements of the situation identified in the research provide a robust framework for successful distributed leadership in very large primary schools. They confirm the importance of the model of activity theory used by Gronn (2001). This will be adapted when putting forward a model for successful distributed leadership which will identify more clearly the importance of accountability, empowerment and common purpose. The three ways that distributed leadership take place identified by Spillane (2006) as design; default and crisis are not contradicted by the research. Research has shown however, that the attention to the design of leadership backed up by accountability, empowerment and common purpose would enable the participants to feel able to lead by default or in a crisis.

A final crucial aspect in defining the situation is the role of the head teacher. It was identified in the literature review that a contingent style of leadership was necessary. This meant that the head teacher applied leadership structures to the school to achieve his/her vision based on a full understanding of the needs of the children and the school rather than an imposed structure based on a preferred style of leadership. It was quite clear that the three head teachers here had made decisions about leadership from a complete understanding of their schools. This is described in the concept of contingency (2). Aspects of this have been described above. Coupled with this were characteristics of strong leadership (1) which included a single minded determination to achieve their vision for the school. The key to the success of distributed leadership in these schools was the head teacher. Over long periods of time the three head teachers have created the structures and built the teams and increased the capacity of individuals to lead. This was done because they deemed it necessary to provide a high quality education. Without their belief distributed leadership would not be successful. An attraction of distributed leadership explained in the literature review is that it moves away from the notion of the

heroic leader as discussed earlier. This research shows that distributed leadership does not mean that the leadership of the school has been devolved from formal leaders to others in school as would be suggested from the theory. The relationship is subtler than that. Successful distributed leadership is dependant on strong, contingent leadership from the head teacher. In return the head teacher needs to distribute leadership in order to have a powerful impact on classroom practice as explained by Southworth (2004).

The key elements of the situation for successful distributed leadership in very large primary schools are empowerment, accountability, common purpose and the contingent style of the head teacher. The relationship between distributed leadership and the schools is one of mutual dependency. Distributed leadership needs certain conditions to be in place as described for it to be successful, and schools need this form of leadership to increase there effectiveness and impact on the classroom. This situation then ensures successful leader plus activity as manifest in individual leaders. It will also provide a context for leadership practice which could lead to value added distributed leadership. In the second section I will identify characteristics and behaviour of leadership practice identified in the research which would appear to be important contributing elements to leadership practice. From this, conclusions will be drawn about the key elements necessary for leadership practice in the model for successful distributed leadership.

Value Added Distributed Leadership. The characteristics and behaviour of leaders.

In this sections I will use the two research questions to organise my conclusions commenting on the theory and research discussed in the literature review where appropriate.

- Are the interpersonal characteristics of influence and intuition an important contributory aspect to successful distributed leadership?

Gronn (2003) identified that one of three categories of concertive action was intuitive working relations which I argued was key to understanding leadership practice. Spillane (2006) described this similarly as heedfulness. Members of the group consider what they do in relation to other members of the group and not in terms of their own individual actions. It was therefore discussed that the interpersonal characteristics of influence and intuition were important for successful leadership practice to take place. Gronn (2003) described influence as reciprocal based on developing understandings

between team members. Hobby et al (2005) identified the following characteristics as underpinning this influence these were; integrity, utility, warmth, reciprocity and maintenance.

In the research I have identified concepts that confirm to a great extent the belief in the importance of intuition and influence. In order to be intuitive and influential however these leaders exhibit a range of other personal characteristics. The list of characteristics of informal leaders outlined in the literature review by Spillane (2006) and Hobby et al (2005) are broadly identified in the research. The category of optimistic leaders (6) identifies several positive traits which they value and were observed. They all had a positive outlook exhibiting high levels of self confidence. They had an optimistic attitude to change and problem solving. In the concept of characteristics of interpersonal relations (7) they demonstrated that respect and trust were highly valued as well as openness and honesty (6). I consider that this optimism has been brought about by design. By empowering (8) staff and fostering a strong sense of common purpose (5) over a number of years leadership practice has been nurtured (6). Through empowerment staff have the capacity for leadership and the conditions for strong interpersonal relationships have been created. Leaders personally benefited from the relationships established valuing the friendship and affection (7) within the teams. This led to intuition and empathy between participants (7). Intuition played two roles, one as a means of reinforcing the common purpose (5) of participants fostering trust (7) and respect (7) as well as being an important aspect of interaction between participants. This will be discussed when explaining the interactions between participants. Influence is identified as important in the category of team facilitation. Participants trust and respect each other (7). Therefore they are willing to share ideas and seek advice as well as giving support and reassurance (7). This is clearly reciprocal influence as explained by Gronn (2003) with the underlying characteristics identified by Hobby et al (2005). It is interesting to note that participants do not refer to their interpersonal relationships as influential, but refer to them in terms of the benefits gained from reciprocal influence – sharing ideas, advice and support and reassurance.

Personal characteristics of optimistic leaders (6) allied to their interpersonal relationships (7) therefore lead to intuition and influence. As well as being an interpersonal characteristic intuition is also an identifiable element in the interactions between participants when leadership practice takes place. The research has really just

confirmed the importance of influence and intuition to leadership practice as discussed in the literature review. Where it differs from the literature review is that the research has identified a causal link between the situation (empowerment (3), common purpose (5) and pragmatic recruitment (2)) and the interpersonal characteristics of influence and intuition with the personal characteristics of participants bridging the divide. I have also identified that intuition is not only an interpersonal characteristic in leadership practice but also one of the devices of interaction that allows for the efficient flow of ideas. This will be referred to when answering the final research question.

- Is it possible to identify the interactions that take place in leadership practice that lead to value added distributed leadership?

In the literature review Lakomski (2002) argues that one of the weaknesses of the work of Spillane (2006) is that not enough regard is given to the interactions between leaders. The focus of fully understanding leadership practice should be in the interactions rather than the individual characteristics of leaders. Spillane (2006) identifies where practice is happening but does not explain the characteristics of the interactions between participants. Before discussing the interaction it is important to use the research to draw some conclusions about the relationship between leader plus activity and leadership practice. As well as this, some observations about the purpose of leadership practice and how it is manifest can be commented on. Spillane (2006) and Gronn (2003) both list types of distributed leadership, but they give little information about when leadership practice is most appropriate, what it looks like or its relationship with leadership plus. I would argue that most schools regardless of the quality of leadership will have distributed leadership in terms of leader plus activity. The most successful schools however will have valued added distributed leadership because attention to the situation as described has led to successful leadership practice. Leader plus and leadership practice therefore are both necessary in successful distributed leadership. The research has shown through meeting observations that it is likely that the majority of leadership practice is leader plus activity. This is confirmed by the types of distributed leadership identified by Spillane (2006), MacBeath (2005) and Gronn (2003). Essentially leaders have to do a lot of work as individuals. In the meetings observed the evidence showed that the vast majority of meeting time was taken up by leadership plus activity. It would be useful in future research to identify whether the ratio of leader plus and leadership practice activity is the same where leadership is identified informally. The meeting

showed that leadership practice happened when participants took part in the following activities:

- Problem solving
- Decisions about future action
- Idea development
- Reaching or reinforcing a common understanding, belief or agreement.

There maybe other types of activity which lend themselves to leadership practice but this research did not identify them. The first three activities are all creative, demanding contributions of all participants. The final area seems to reinforce the shared common purpose of the teams and often led to decisions about future action based on their common understanding. These activity types have not yet been identified in other research that I am aware of when examining leadership practice. Most leadership practice appeared to follow the pattern identified as activity structure (8). Activity ranged in length from one minute to seven minutes. They were intense bursts of uncontrolled interaction within the informal parameters established in the concept of activity structure (8). It was interesting to note that at these times the head teachers appeared to consciously take a back seat in discussion only intervening to bring the discussion to a resolution (8). This is due I think to their strong belief in empowerment (3). Humour (9) seemed to be an important part of this activity structure. This does not appear to have been identified as a characteristic of leadership practice in the literature but it was important. I feel that the research only allows me to hypothesis on the purpose of humour in leadership practice. It seems to create breathing spaces, allowing participants the opportunity to draw back from the activity before carrying on. Rather like the breaks found in team games.

Interactions between leaders are illustrated in the concept of verbal strategies (9) and also in the category of common understanding (5).

I have identified five types of interaction in the concept of verbal strategies (9)

- Opinions
- Interruptions
- Intuition
- Support
- Humour.

Participants freely gave opinions to each other throughout leadership practice. It seems to be a mechanism which allowed participants to disagree or give a differing opinion from others without causing confrontation or affecting the positive atmosphere of the dialogue. It also allowed participants to air differing points of view in the process of reaching a common understanding and hence decisions about future activity.

Interruptions were used continually. I would hypothesise that they are a symptom of the intensity of activity which is a characteristic of leadership practice. Ideas are thrown into the hat when it suits the participant. This seems to be a sort of brainstorming and happens throughout the activity. Other participants chose to ignore some interruptions or collectively value and adopt some as a means of moving the leadership practice forward. Interruptions or ideas offered were never criticised so all were confident to take part in this interaction. Some interruptions involved two or more participants withdrawing from the practice for a few seconds to reinforce their common shared belief before re-entering the activity with another opinion.

Intuition seems to play a very important role in the following way. It was observed in the team meetings that participants behaved intuitively by completing sentences for others, understanding without speaking and copying what others said. As well as demonstrating high levels of support and reassurance for others (7). It appeared to be a very efficient way of conducting business. The intuitive understanding amongst participants meant that there was a type of shorthand which negated the need for explanation, recap or questioning. This would have slowed activity during these episodes. Leadership practice was able to flow between participants because of their intuitive understanding of each other.

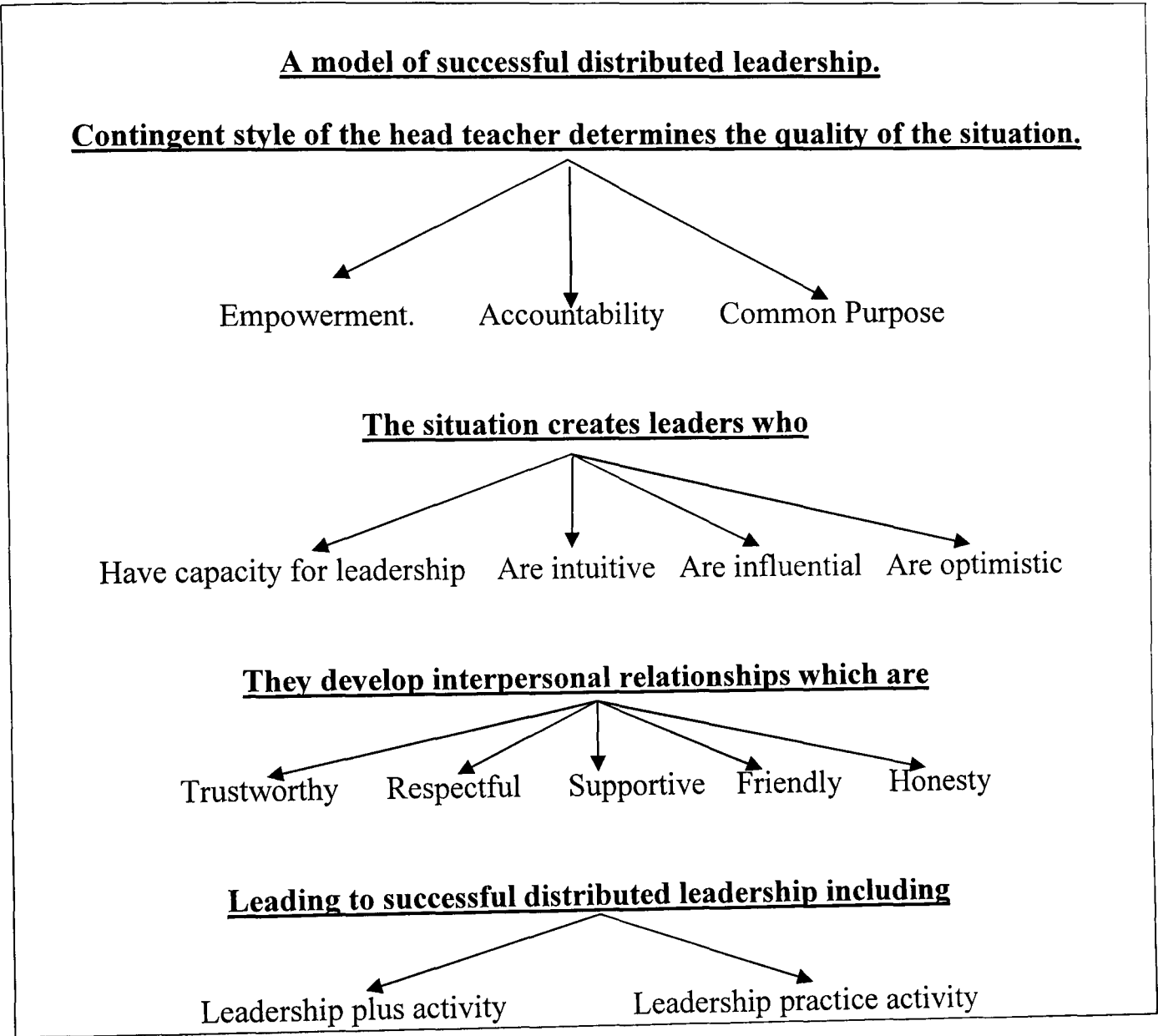
Throughout leadership practice episodes support was given verbally or physically through nods. It appears that nearly all opinions demanded a response. These were nearly always positive. Common purpose was continually reinforced in this way and characterised the optimism of these leaders. Participants mutually reinforced each others participation in the leadership practice.

Humour was used as described above to give participants breathing space. It also maintained the very positive nature of leadership practice. It was interesting to note that

in most humorous interactions it appeared to be the same person who introduced the humour which other participants responded to by laughing or reinforcing with a follow up humorous statement.

I feel that in the research I have only really identified a group of interactions that have not as far as I am aware been associated with leadership practice. Further research is needed to fully understand the purpose of these interactions and the relationship they have with interpersonal characteristics. What I find remarkable is that in the three schools that have no connection with each other the same types of interaction were observed. I therefore conclude that these interactions which take place in leadership practice are dependant on the interpersonal skills of leaders and the interpersonal relationships amongst leaders which in turn are dependant on the situation as described in the last section. In the final concluding section I will reinforce the relationships between the different aspects of distributed leadership by creating a model from the conclusions drawn from this research that could be used by very large primary schools that aspire to being learning communities.

3. A proposed model of distributed leadership which could be applied to very large primary schools that aspire to being learning communities.

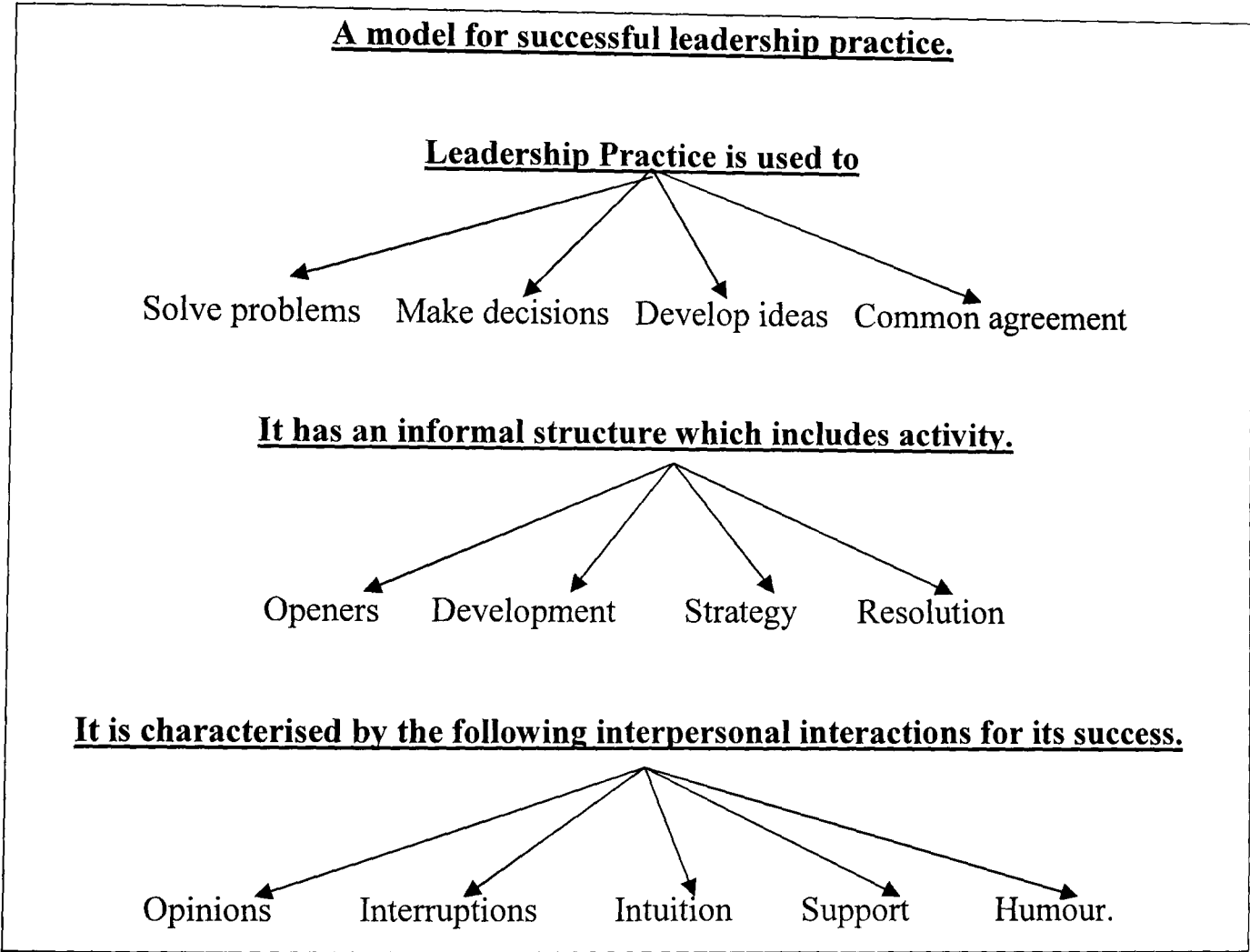


A proposed model of distributed leadership in very large primary schools.

This model is purposefully designed as a top down model. This is because leadership is distributed. The role of the head teacher and their contingent style of leadership are crucial to the development of the situation for distributed leadership. Leaders are empowered to lead through staff training, personal development and delegation. Head teachers ensure that this is in the interests of the school by having robust systems of accountability. Over a period of time through the head teachers' contingent lead the school develops a distinct identity and common purpose which all are expected to invest in and motivates leaders to work for the common good of the school. Through empowerment, accountability and common purpose leaders are developed who have a

capacity for leadership. They demonstrate interpersonal skills of intuition and influence. They are optimistic leaders who are flexible, positive, and confident. Through their common purpose they develop relationships based on trust, respect, friendship and honesty and demonstrate high levels of support for each other. This ensures high quality leader plus and leadership practice activity. This proposed model then includes all the ingredients then that would lead to value added distributed leadership.

In addition I would like to add this proposed model of leadership practice as identified in the research schools. It is by no means complete and is more of a tentative hypothesis showing what leadership practice looks like aiding the identification of value added distributed leadership.



A proposed model of leadership practice.

Leadership practice is used specifically for the tasks identified. In other leadership activities, for example when evaluating practice it would not be appropriate or an efficient use of time. The quality of leaders interpersonal skills and relationships means they carry out leadership practice using the informal structure identified above which I

would suggest is not consciously recognised. Participants have a range of interactive tools which they employ to ensure the efficiency and success of leadership practice. These interactive tools are a product of their interpersonal skills and relationships. They are intrinsic to the participants who may not be able to articulate what they are doing when they take part in this activity.

The research findings which generally confirm the theory of distributed leadership in the literature review mean that I am confident that the model of successful distributed leadership demonstrated above could be employed by head teachers when developing the effectiveness and efficiency of distributed leadership in very large primary schools aspiring to be learning communities. I am less confident about the model of leadership practice. The limited nature of this research combined with the lack of theory and research explained in the literature review mean that the proposed model can be no more than a hypothesis of the purpose, structure and interactions involved in leadership practice. More research is needed in order to create a secure model that could be applied generally to other schools.

Bibliography

- Andrews, D., Lewis, M. (2002) The experience of a professional community: teachers developing a new image of themselves and their workplace. *Educational Research*, 44(3), pp. 237 – 254
- Barker, G. (2003) Case study 1: reengineering teaching and learning in a primary school. In Davies, B., West-Burnham, J. *Handbook for Educational Leadership and Management*. Pearson, Longman
- Bennett, N., Wise, C., Harvey, J.A. (2003) *Distributed Leadership*. NCSL.
- Benson, S. (2002) *Leading Learning: Instructional leadership in infant schools*, NCSL.
- Bryman, A. (2004) *Social Research Methods*. Oxford University Press.
- Bulmer, M. (1979) Concepts in the Analysis of Qualitative Data. *Sociological review*, 27, pp 651-677.
- Bush, T. (2003) *Theories of Educational Leadership and Management*. Sage.
- Calder, B. J. (1977) Focus Groups and the Nature of Qualitative Marketing Research. *Journal of Marketing Research*. 14, pp. 353-364
- Charmaz, K. (2004) Grounded Theory. In Lewis-Beck, M.S., Bryman, A. & Liao, T.F. *The Sage Encyclopaedia of Social Science Research Methods*. Sage Publications.
- Cheng, Y. C. & Cheung W. M. (2002) Four Types of School Environment: Multilevel Self-Management and Educational Quality. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 10 (1), pp 71 – 100.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2000), *Research Methods in Education*. Routledge Falmer

- Egerton, M. (1995) Emotions and Discursive Norms. In Harre, R. & Stearns, P. *Discursive Psychology in Practice*. Sage Publications.
- Elmore, R.F. (2000) *Building a New Structure for School Leadership*. Albert Shanker Institute.
- Engestrom, Y. (1998) Cognition and communication at work. In Gronn, P. (2003) *The New Work of Educational Leaders*. Sage
- Fullan, M. (2001) *Leading in a Culture of Change*, San Francisco, Jossey Bass
- Gardner, H. (1993) *Multiple Intelligences The Theory in Practice*. Perseus
- Geertz, C. (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books.
- Gronn, P. (2000) Distributed Properties: A New Architecture for Leadership. *Educational Management and Administration*, 28 (3), pp 317 – 338.
- Gronn, P. (2003) *The New Work of Educational Leaders*. Sage.
- Gubrium, J. F. & Holstein, J. A. (1997) *The New Language of Qualitative Method*. Oxford University Press.
- Harre, R. (1995) Agentive Discourse. In Harre, R. & Stearns, P. *Discursive Psychology in Practice*. Sage Publications.
- Harris, A. (2002) *Distributed Leadership in Schools: leading or Misleading?* British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society
- Harris, A. & Chapman, C. (2002) *Effective Leadership in Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances*. NCSL.

- Harris, A & Lambert, L. (2003) *Building Leadership Capacity for School improvement*. OU Press.
- Harris, A. (2003) Teacher Leadership and School Improvement. In Harris, A., Day, C., Hopkins, D., Hadfield, M., Hargreaves, A. & Chapman, C. *Effective Leadership for School Improvement*. Routledge Falmer.
- Harris, A. (2003) teacher Leadership: a new orthodoxy. In Davies, B. & West-Burnham, J. *Handbook of Educational Leadership and Management*. Pearson, Longman.
- Hart, S., Dixon, A., Drummond, M., McIntyre, D. (2004) *Learning Without Limits*. O.U.Press.
- Hobby, R., Jerome, N. & Gent, D. (2005) *Connected Leadership: A model of influence for those without power*. HayGroup Education.
- Holmes, D. (2003) *One – to – one leadership*. NCSL
- Hopkins, D. (2001) *School Improvement for Real*. Routledge Falmer.
- Inglis, L.M. & Sarros, J.C. (2003) *Distributed Leadership: A Case Study of an Australian Voluntary NonProfit Organisation*. Monash University.
- Jefferson, G. (1984) On the Organisation of Laughter in Talk about Troubles. In Atkinson, J.M. & Heritage, J. *Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge University Press.
- Jeffrey, H. (2005) *Raising achievement at George Mitchell School, Leyton E10: A distributed leadership structure*. NCSL.
- Kenning, S. (2002) *The Intelligent Gaze: Leadership, lead learners and the concept of individual growth – a reflective enquiry*. NCSL.

- Kelly, A. (2002) *Team Talk: Sharing Leadership in Primary Schools*. NCSL.
- Kimber, M. (2003) *Does size matter: distributed leadership in small secondary schools*. NCSL.
- Lakomski, G. (2002) distributed leadership: An idea whose time has come? *Keynote speech at Conference of BELMAS*
- Leithwood, K. & Jantzi, D. (2000) The effects of transformational leadership on organisational conditions and student engagement with school. *Journal of Educational Administration*. 38 (2) pp.112 – 129
- Liethwood, K. & Jantzi, D. (2000). The Effects of Different Sources of Leadership on Student Engagement in School. In Riley, K.A. & Louis, K.S. *Leadership for Change and School Reform*. Routledge Fowler.
- Liethwood, K. & Riehl, C. (2003) *What we Know about Successful School Leadership*. NCSL.
- Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E. (1985) *Naturalistic Enquiry*. Sage Publications.
- Maassachusetts Department of Education. (2004) *Strategies for distributed leadership*. Maassachusetts Department of Education Web Site.
- MacBeath, J. (2004) distributed leadership. NCSL distributed leadership Conference keynote speech.
- MacBeath, J.(2005) Leadership as distributed: a matter of practice. *School Leadership and Management*, 25 (4) pp.349 – 366
- MacGilchrist, B., Myers, K., Reed, J. (1997) *The Intelligent School*. Paul Chapman.
- Matza, D. (1969) *Becoming Deviant*. Prentice Hall.

O'Connell, D. C. & Kowal S. (1995). "Transcription systems for spoken discourse". In Verschueren, J., O'Spearn, J., Blommaert, J. & Bulcaen C. *Handbook of Pragmatics*. John Benjamin Publishing company.

Ofsted, (2005) *Using the evaluation Schedule, Guidance for Inspectors*. Ofsted

Oduro, G. (2005) distributed leadership in schools. *Education Journal* 80 pp. 23- 26.

O'Sullivan, F. & West – Burnham, J. (1998) Building the Learning Leader for the Learning Organisation. In O'Sullivan, F. & West – Burnham, J. *Leadership And Professional Development in School*. Prentice Hall.

Potter, J. & Wetherall, M. (1995) Discourse Analysis. In Smith, A. Harre, Rom & Langenhove. L.V. *Rethinking Methods in Psychology*. Sage Publications.

Ritchie, R. (2004) *leadership development and succession planning*. NCSL.

Roberts, C. (2000) Leading Without Control. In Senge, P. *Schools that Learn*, Nicholas Brealey.

Senge, P. (2003) *Schools That Learn*. Nicholas Brearley.

Sergiovanni, T.J. (2005) *Strengthening the Heartbeat*. Jossey-Bass.

Sherer, J.Z. (2004) Distributed Leadership Practice: The Subject Matters. *Preliminary Draft prepared for Presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Education Research Association, San Diego*.

Smith, A. (1996) *Accelerated Learning in The Classroom*. Network Education Press.

Smith, A. (1995) Semi-structured interviewing and Qualitative Analysis. In Smith, A. Harre, Rom & Langenhove. L.V. *Rethinking Methods in Psychology*. Sage Publications.

Southworth, G. (1998) *Leading Improving Primary Schools*. Falmer Press.

Southworth, G. (2002) Instructional Leadership in Schools: reflections and empirical evidence. *School Leadership & Management*. 22 (1) pp. 73 – 99.

Southworth, G. (2004) *Primary School Leadership in Context*. Routledge Falmer

Southworth, G & Weindling, D. (2002) *Leadership in Large Primary Schools*. Esmee Fairbairn Foundation.

Spillane, J.P., Halverson, R. & Diamond, J.B (2001). Investigative School Leadership Practice: a Distributive Perspective. *Educational Researcher*, 30 (3), pp. 23-28.

Spillane, J.P. & Sherer, J.Z. (2004) A Distributed Perspective on School Leadership: Leadership Practice as Stretched Over People and Place. *Preliminary Draft prepared for Presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Education Research Association, San Diego*.

Spillane, J. P. (2005) Primary School Leadership Practice: how the subject matters. *School leadership and Management*, 25 (4) pp383 – 397

Spillane, J.P. (2006) *Distributed Leadership*. Jossey - Bass

Storey, A. (2004) The Problem of distributed leadership in schools. *School Leadership & Management*. 24 (3) pp 249 – 264.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J.M. (1990) *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. Sage Publications.

Thompson, J.D. (1967) *Organisations in action*. McGraw – Hill.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978) Mind in Society. In Gronn, P. (2003) *The New Work of Educational Leaders*. Sage

Wallace, M. (2002) Modelling distributed leadership and Management effectiveness: Primary school senior management teams in England and Wales. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*. 13 (2) pp. 163 – 186

Weick, K. E., & Roberts, K.H. (1993) Collective minds in organisations. *Administrative science quarterly*, 38(3) pp. 357 – 381.

Wise, D. (2003) Case study 2: reengineering teaching and learning in a secondary school. In Davies, B., West-Burnham, J. *Handbook for Educational Leadership and Management*. Pearson, Longman

Woods, P.A. (2004) Democratic leadership: drawing distinctions with distributed leadership. *Leadership in Education*. 7 (1) pp. 3- 26.