

AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY OF LEARNING CENTRED LEADERSHIP IN AN AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL

BRIAN COLDMAN

**A RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
SUBMITTED FOR THE
MSc LEARNING AND TEACHING 2016**

DEPOSIT AND CONSULTATION OF THESIS

One copy of your dissertation will be deposited in the Department of Education Library via the WebLearn site where it is intended to be available for consultation by all Library users. In order to facilitate this, the following form should be completed which will be inserted in the library copy your dissertation.

Note that some graphs/tables may be removed in order to comply with copyright restrictions.

Surname	Coldman
First Name	Brian
Faculty Board	Education
Title of Dissertation	An Action Research Study of Learning Centred Leadership in an American High School

Declaration by the candidate as author of the dissertation

1. I understand that I am the owner of this dissertation and that the copyright rests with me unless I specifically transfer it to another person.
2. I understand that the Department requires that I shall deposit a copy of my dissertation in the Department of Education Library via the WebLearn site where it shall be available for consultation, and that reproductions of it may be made for other Libraries so that it can be available to those who to consult it elsewhere. I understand that the Library, before allowing my dissertation to be consulted either in the original or in reproduced form, will require each person wishing to consult it to sign a declaration that he or she recognises that the copyright of this thesis belongs to me. I permit limited copying of my dissertation by individuals (no more than 5% or one chapter) for personal research use. No quotation from it and no information derived from it may be published without my prior written consent and I undertake to supply a current address to the Library so this consent can be sought.
3. I agree that my dissertation shall be available for consultation in accordance with paragraph 2 above.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Doctor Nigel Fancourt for all his support, assistance and wise counsel, whilst I have been undertaking this research project. It was immensely helpful and very much appreciated.

I would also like to sincerely thank the District Superintendent, the Principal, and his colleagues at 'Buffett High School' for allowing me to undertake my research at the school and for being willing to participate in the process. Your contributions are greatly appreciated. It was a privilege for me to 'experience' your professional practice. You are truly inspirational.

Abstract

This study examines the leadership practices of a number of leaders in an American High School. The school is currently engaged in a major change process with the introduction of three action plans which will have significant implications for its teaching and learning process.

An essential aim of the study was to provide an informed view of how leaders were responding to the challenges of these changes, and in particular, how their practices were impacting on staff learning. In doing so, it was hoped that findings would inform and support the future directions of leadership in the school.

Knowledge of the school, strongly suggested that leadership practices at the school are consistent with a developing model of leadership that may be defined as 'learning centred'. A learning centred leadership model, after Southworth (2003) was used as the analytical framework for the research. The principles and practices of this model were explored in relation to how the leaders at the school were 'leading learning' and developing as 'leaders of learning'.

This is an interpretative action research project. Through this process I sought to answer questions with regard to the school's developing leadership practices and how these were impacting on the teaching and learning process in the school. The action research required a collaborative working in a cyclic process. A range of data was collected and triangulation was used in its analysis.

My findings are indicative of broad based practice in the school, where leaders are engaged in leading learning in a purposeful collaborative culture, with developing and supporting one another's practice as the norm.

Evidence demonstrates also, that leaders are continuing to develop their practices as leaders of learning, and as such, my conclusions are, that learning centred leadership is continuing to develop at the school, in ways consistent with its principles and practices.

Contents	Pages
Chapter 1 Introduction	6
Chapter 2 Literature Review	11
Chapter3 Research Design and Methodology	35
Chapter4 Findings and Discussion	61
Chapter5 Conclusions	74
Chapter 6 Evaluation	78
References	80
Appendices	85
Appendix 1 Framework of Action Cycles: 1-3, Buffett High School, 2015-16	85
Appendix 2 Calendar of Meetings, Buffett High School, 2015-16	87
Appendix 3 A sample from notes, initial dialogue with Principal, July, 2015	88
Appendix 4 A sample of field notes, observation of Training Day, March, 2016	90
Appendix 5 A sample of a memo, re. documentation analysis, April, 2016	92
Appendix 6 A sample of a Data information sheet, interview, March,2016	93
Appendix 7 List of initial codes used in research analysis	94
Appendix 8 A sample of a coded transcript from an interview, March, 2016	95
Appendix 9 Principal's end of year summary report	97
List of Figures	
Figure 1 School Development Framework/ Data Collection Schedule, 2015-16	
Figure 2 Evidence Based lesson Planning	

Chapter 1: Introduction

This research and development project is an action research study which focuses on the leadership practices of a High School's Principal, its Assistant Principals and its Department Coordinators, in their various involvements in the implementing of the school's three action plans for the academic year, 2015-2016. In undertaking this study, I wished to ascertain whether 'learning centred leadership' was developing in the school.

Working in an associate role alongside the Principal particularly, and with his colleagues, during the past academic year, has allowed me to explore the collaborative working of a group of leaders as they considered, challenged and changed the 'constraints' of their leadership roles. Their purpose was to bring about further improvements in the teaching and learning practices in the school, through resultant changes in practice.

Aim:

The essential aim of this research was to support the 'action' of a group of leaders as they brought about changes in their leadership practices in this specific context, along with the acquisition of enhanced skills and expertise among this group of 'leaders of learning'.

Hopefully, such developments would contribute to further improvements in the teaching and learning in the school. My underlying aim was to consider, with these colleagues, the nature of their professional practice, and how this may be contributing to their development as leaders of learning and, as such, supporting the development of learning centred leadership in the school.

My knowledge of the school's leadership, and my understanding, from my review of the literature, of what is learning centred leadership, strongly suggests that their practices are

consistent with a developing model of leadership that may be defined as 'learning- centred leadership.' Through this action research project, I sought to answer questions with regard to the school's developing leadership practices, and how these might be developed further.

Rationale:

As stated above, my associate role, during this current academic year, has given me the opportunity to work alongside the Principal of an American High School, and his Assistant Principals and Department Coordinators in a collaborative exercise that has involved this group of leaders in a significant change process in the school. This has impacted on the school's teaching and learning practices and their leadership roles.

Being able to undertake a research and development project based on the above, I feel, will provide valuable, continued personal professional development. More so, I hope, my findings will provide evidence that learning centred leadership is developing in the school, and is of benefit to the both the school's leadership, and to the school as a whole.

From ongoing dialogue with the Principal, the value to the school of such a research exercise was acknowledged, and is recognised in my project's specific focus on his leadership practices, and those of his Assistant Principals and Department Coordinators, and how their actions are impacting on the teaching and learning in the school. This research, I argue, will provide data indicative of how learning centred leadership is developing in the school.

My research has importance too, I feel, to education in general, in that it may provide data that could inform and help develop leaders in the broadest sense, and assist in equipping them with a wider, but more learning focused, skills base which, given the importance of school leadership to teaching and learning, could enhance student achievement.

Researching the phenomenon of leadership (and, in this case, learning centred leadership) through the context (or micro context) of a school, may provide new insights and further understanding re.the importance of this, to the teaching and learning in the school. Such findings may be of benefit also, to the wider educational community.

Context

The context of the proposed research is an American public Senior High School, in a school district in the north eastern United States. (For the purposes of anonymity, the school will be referred to as 'Buffett High School').

Data from the State's Department of Education, School Performance Profile (2014-2015) show that Buffett High School admits students from grades 9-12 and has 1169 students on roll. Of these students, 81.27% are of White ethnicity, 9.15% Black or African American, 4.62% Hispanic, 3.42%Asian and 1,54% Multi Racial. 28.49% are economically disadvantaged, and 13.77% are special education students.

It is a high performing school, having achieved an academic score of 89.1 points from a maximum of 100. This score is based on a range of indicators which include State tests and other data such as, closing the achievement gap , academic growth, cohort graduation rate, attendance, and advanced placement credits. By way of a small scale comparison, I looked at five other nearby schools from the State's School Performance Profile, and Buffett's performance exceeded these, and this, despite less favourable demographic circumstances. (A performance analysis in relation to other schools on a State wide was not undertaken).

The school's organisational structure is based on a Principal, two Assistant Principals and sixteen Department Coordinators (including Special Education). These colleagues are the school's key leaders, and each have clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

A broad framework of meetings are well established, and in place in the school's structure as a central part of the school's annual cycle of planning, development and implementation of its programmes of teaching and learning.

I was formerly Headteacher, of a Comprehensive School in south west England . At the school, collaborative working, action research and distributed leadership (staff and students) provided a major focus to our improvement agenda. I was closely involved in professional development, not least that of the development of leaders. Buffett High School and the school have shared an educational partnership since 1999, and I have had a rich opportunity to be a part of this collaboration of student and teacher exchange programmes and curricular dialogue. Throughout my involvement with Buffett High School, I have seen many developments in that time. My current involvement in the academic year, 2015-16, provided a helpful timescale for my research, coming, as it did, at a time of broad based whole school developments with implications for significant changes in teaching practices.

The context at Buffett High School at the beginning of the 2015-16 academic year was one of a major focus on its Development Priorities for the coming year, that is, the introduction and implementation of three Action Plans. These are, 1. 'Evidence-based lesson level planning' (individual lesson planning formats for individual teachers) ; 2. 'Digital leadership' (further enriching instructional assessment practices and learning through technology) ; and ,3. 'English, Language and Arts' (the implementation of a new English curriculum, and as a process model to be available for other Departments).

The school's 'actions' in relation to its Development Priorities offers a helpful framework for my research. This small scale action research process specifically focuses on the leadership practices of a group of leaders, and will take place alongside, at times overlapping with, certainly drawing from, and perhaps contributing to, the wider whole school process.

I do not believe either process should be seen in isolation, and I regard them as complementary and mutually supportive. The leaders' involvement in the implementation of the various Action Plans (as will be shown) is very much about their leading of learning. As such, these two 'action' processes, so defined, perhaps, are necessary to each other.

While acknowledging the importance of the school's wider action process (and not least the data that it offers in assisting the answering of my research questions) my research will be concerned with the development of leaders in the school. References to the Action Plans in this project will only be in terms of how the leaders' involvement with these, assists or facilitates leadership development and, more so, learning centred leadership. The scope of my study does not allow a consideration of the Action Plans themselves, for example in terms of their value and importance to the school, other than seeing the practices of school leaders (arising from the planning, introduction and implementation of the said plans) as 'conduits' for the development of learning centred leadership in the school.

The Action Plans, and practices emanating from, or associated with them, can be regarded as research 'tools'. They will allow me to consider the practices of the Principal, his Assistant Principals and Department Coordinators in introducing and implementing the plans, and to be involved in considering how this process relates to the development of learning centred leadership in the school.

A consideration of learning centred leadership raises a number of questions such as ,what is the nature of this model, what context or conditions are needed for its development, and what practices characterise it? Such questions needed answers to enable me to establish with any degree of certainty, the occurrence of learning centred leadership in Buffett High School. Accordingly, I undertook a review of the literature on leadership, and in particular, school leadership, to help clarify my thinking and to find answers to my questions. My literature review also helped inform the questions for my research..

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction:

This literature review examines a number of writings on the wider concept and practice of leadership, and specifically, on school leadership. Various definitions of leadership are considered, to provide a working definition of leadership. This in turn will be examined in relation to a detailed review of school leadership literature, and associated models.

Accordingly, reviewing the literature should be able to inform my main research aim, as to how learning centred leadership is developing in the school, and also, to identify questions which may need further research.

Definitions of leadership:

What is meant by the term leadership is a complex question. (Bolden, 2004 ; Grint, 2004). It requires considered, critical examination to enable an understanding of its meaning and relevance, not least, to the context of schooling. As Stogdill (1974) states, *"There are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept."*

Shaver (2012) in an article, *"The Many Definitions of Leadership,"* argues that much of the diversity regarding leadership definitions is driven by the theoretical underpinning or approach the definer uses when crafting a new definition and that, unfortunately, at times, this lack of definitional clarity has led to significant confusion by those interested in the topic. That said, a number of positions (if not definitions in themselves) are discussed below, and offer some helpful insights, I suggest, as to the meaning of leadership.

Leadership has been described as setting a direction and inspiring others to participate on a journey. An early quote, attributed to John Quincy Adams (1767- 1848), provides such a definition of leadership,

" If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."

Similarly, as Bolden (2004) argues,

"Leadership is a complex phenomenon that touches on many other important organisational, social and personal processes. It depends on a process of influence, whereby people are inspired to work towards group goals, not through coercion, but through personal motivation." (p.5)

Rost (1997) states that traditional leadership scholars, and the theories that they developed, were almost totally concerned with the peripheries of leadership, which he defined as 'traits', 'personality characteristics' , "born or made" issues, 'effectiveness', 'style' etc. This emphasis on peripheral elements, he argues, allowed practitioners to seize something tangible in their aim to define and practice leadership and to believe in the effectiveness of the prescribed behaviours. He argues that, whether theories and research actually dealt with the essence of leadership, did not seem to have been overly important to these researchers. Rather, he says, they were more concerned that research was based on empirical data and was done according to traditional , quantitative methods.

According to Rost (1997), the result is that leadership scholars have 'spilled much ink' on peripheral elements surrounding leadership and its content, instead of '*on the nature of leadership as a process ; on leadership as a dynamic relationship.*' Most of the research on leadership, he argues, has emphasised the same two items, the peripheral aspects and the content of leadership, and almost none, he says, has been aimed at understanding the essential nature of what leadership is, "*the process whereby leaders and followers relate to one another to achieve a purpose.*" (Rost, 1997)

Rost(1997) goes on to argue for the need to develop a school of articulated leadership that integrates our understanding of leadership into a holistic framework- a new school of leadership, which, he states, was a problem that must be solved in the 90s as people prepared for the 21st century. In doing so, he proposed a new definition and paradigm for leadership, distinguishing it from a common view of it as management.

Yukl (2010) considered a 'trait versus process' argument in discussing the concept of leadership. The idea of being 'born to lead,' he states, emphasizes a leader's attributes. Underlying this approach, he argues, was the assumption that some people are natural leaders, endowed with certain traits not possessed by others. This is very different, he says, from describing leadership as a process. In essence, the trait viewpoint, he argues, suggests that leadership is inherent in a few select people and restricted to only those who have special talents with which they are born. He subsequently defined leadership as,

"...the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives" (p.8) Yukl, (2010).

The various definitions of leadership, I argue, suggest a number of elements which are crucial to the practice of leadership.

For Northouse (2010) leadership is about establishing shared objectives through working with colleagues. It is not 'leader' imposed. Leaders and followers are not regarded as better than one another, but intertwined in a way that requires them to be understood in their relationship with each other and as a collective body of two or more people.

The idea of emergent leadership is perhaps relevant here, that is, the exercise of leadership by a group member (or members) because of the manner in which other members in the group react to him/her. This way of leading is seen as emerging over time, through positive communication behaviours such as verbal involvement, asking other group members for opinions, and initiating new/ compelling ideas (Fisher, 1974 ; Northouse, 2010).

According to Daft (2005) and Northouse (2010) viewing leadership as a process implies that it is a phenomenon that is contextual, and a practice that everyone is capable of exercising. They suggest leadership can be learned, and is observable through what leaders do or how they behave.

In addition, a definition of leadership, concerned, not with the actions of an individual, but with a relationship as the locus, is provided by Ciulla (1998) who states,

" Leadership is not a person or position. It is a complex moral relationship between people, based on trust, obligation, commitment, emotion , and a shared vision of the good."

As such, I argue, a broad working definition of leadership, both in a general sense, and one which is applicable to schools, has been discerned from the above. As Bolden (2004) states, *"Leadership can be conceived of as a social process of influence..."* With reference to this, a discussion of the literature specific to school leadership, follows.

School Leadership:

As previously noted, a plethora of competing and alternative definitions of leadership can be found in the literature, and not least, in relation to schools.

In terms of schooling,

"leadership can be understood as a process of influence based on clear values and beliefs, leading to a vision for the school." (Bush and Glover, 2003)

This vision, they argue, is articulated by leaders whose aim is to gain the commitment of staff and stakeholders, *"to the dream of a better future for the school, its students and stakeholders."* (Bush and Glover, 2003). How leadership is being developed and practised in the embracing of 'a vision for a school', is a central focus in my undertaking of this research study.

A number of models can be discerned from the literature, and in being applied to schools, offer various descriptors of school leadership. A typology (after Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, 1999) can be identified, focusing on, for example, Instructional leadership; Transformational leadership; Moral leadership; Participative leadership; Interpersonal leadership and Contingent leadership. In addition, I suggest, further models may also be discerned including such as, Strategic leadership (Davies and Davies, 2005); Constructivist leadership (Lambert, 2005); Distributed leadership (Harris, 2005; Spillane et al, 2001) and Learning centred leadership (Southworth, 2003, 2005, 2008). These models, I argue, are not exclusive, and also, are perhaps, unreal distinctions. In practice, leadership, I suggest, embodies a range of approaches from more than one model. The various models though, I believe, are indicative of the range and complexity of the ideas of school leadership, and also provide normative frameworks by which we may gain understanding of the process of leadership. Crucial to such an understanding, I argue, is the need, more so, to understand

the connections, and what this might mean in practice, of the relationship between leadership and learning.

Leadership for Learning:

In 1963, John F Kennedy wrote, *"Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other."*

In educational organisations such as schools, as Swaffield and MacBeath (2009) argue, leadership is required to promote learning. As they state,

"In schools, learning should be the prime concern of all those who exercise leadership, and learning should both set the agenda and be the agenda for leadership. Leadership and learning are mutually embedded, so that as we learn we become more confident in sharing with, and leading others." (p. 32)

How we seek to understand leadership and learning in schools, and the relationship between them, is very much about our interpretation of what is leadership and what is learning. For example, if we see leadership located in a single leader ie a Principal, and knowledge being delivered by teacher to student, then this suggests, I argue, that leading learning is primarily about the Principal ensuring students learn what is being taught.

Another perspective sees a school focusing more on putting in place a framework and support for a range of colleagues, such as Departmental Coordinators, so that they can take central roles in developing teaching, and the leadership of learning. In this situation, the Principal's priority, rather than acting as the central leader of action, is to ensure that this process is able to take place by enabling various 'teacher leaders' to focus on leading learning.

Viewed in this way, 'leadership for learning' (as Swaffield and MacBeath, 2009, define it) is another category in the typology of leadership. They argue that it perhaps most closely resembles 'learning centred leadership'. They state also that it resonates with 'principle

centred leadership' and 'moral leadership', and has similarities with 'instructional leadership' and 'transformational leadership'. They acknowledge the differences in these models of leadership, but recognise, as I do, that there is some commonality among them. All are about learning ; that of students, and also that of teachers, and others of the school community, all of whose ongoing learning is necessary to, and in the service of, student learning and achievement. After Swaffield and MacBeath (2009), I argue that, as well as outcomes, 'process' focuses strongly in these models, as does professional commitment to developing practice. Such commitment may be seen to be reflective of values, such as collegial respect and trust, emanating from a learning community's ideals.

The crucial importance here, of building collaborative cultures and increasing professional and social capacity and capital, should not, I argue, be underestimated. 'Social capital', in terms of a school, can be described as its distributed intelligence, its shared leadership and its communal learning. (Coleman,1988) In particular, a form of social capital, which is known as 'bridging social capital', is of relevance here, I suggest. It is concerned with numerous links, that are outward looking and connect people with others, beyond their immediate reference group, opening up new opportunities for seeing, relating and learning (Swaffield and MacBeath, 2009).

Leadership can be revisited and 'reframed' (Bolman and Deal, 1997 ; Swaffield and MacBeath, 2009) which, I argue, can assist our understanding of its meaning and practice. Leadership, in the old frame, is characterised by a high status positioned charismatic individual directing others. In the new, leadership is viewed as activity , both personal and shared, influencing, supporting and developing others, taking the initiative, decision making for the collective benefit, and, at the same time, modelling learning and engaging in

dialogue, with an awareness of, and sensitivity, to context. Implicit in this description is the centrality of shared agency, where both those leading and those learning are active in their roles, and exercise agency. Furthermore, I argue that the leader and learner roles, particularly when applied to teachers as leaders or learners, are not entirely separate, and on many occasions are interchangeable, given a culture that encourages and advocates shared agency.

As such, Swaffield and MacBeath (2009) defined 'leadership for learning' as,

".. a distinct form of educational practice that involves an explicit dialogue, maintaining a focus on learning, attending to the conditions that favour learning, and leadership that is both shared and accountable. Learning and leadership are conceived of as 'activities' linked by the centrality of human agency within a framework of moral purpose." (p. 42)

Leadership, to them, *".. is the connecting tissue which infuses learning at every level and makes the connections a practical reality."* Learning is not the province of students only, but of teachers and others in schools also. At the same time, leadership is, *".. exercised in each sphere of activity."* (Swaffield and MacBeath, 2009)

Learning Centred Leadership:

'Learning centred leadership' then, is a model most closely aligned to the perspective of 'leadership for learning' (Swaffield and MacBeath, 2009). Learning centred leadership arose from the work of Southworth and others, between 2003 and 2005 (as a National College for School Leadership research group) and was informed by the work of Hallinger and Heck (1999).

These latter two writers argued that future research in educational leadership should focus on how leaders make a difference, rather than what leadership is. Research, they state, should broaden the investigation of school leadership and its effects beyond Principalship

and, incorporate the construction of the school as a learning organisation into explorations of school leadership and its effects (Hallinger and Heck, 1999).

Reflecting on these ideas, Southworth(2003) argues, that what distinguishes school leaders from leaders in other organisations is their desire and responsibility to enhance student learning. His position is that leaders make a difference in classrooms and to student learning, both directly and indirectly .They do this, he states, through three processes, namely 'modelling', 'monitoring' and 'dialogue'. Learning centred leadership, he argues, is about the simultaneous use of these three strategies in ways which mutually reinforce each other. It is their combined effect that creates powerful learning for teachers and leaders, through enabling,

"continuous and shared analyses of teaching and learning, which inform teachers' actions in classrooms and lead to improved teaching and student learning" (Southworth,2005).

Southworth (2005) expands on the features of the three strategies, which, he argues are the 'vehicles' of leaders' influence in, 'creating powerful learning for teachers and leaders.'

'Modelling', he states, is leading by example through our actions. A leader using his/her classroom practice as an example for other teachers, influences them. *'Monitoring'* he says is knowing what is going on, using data, observing classrooms and action research.

Collegially analysing learning outcome data, reviewing test results and assessment information, he maintains, develops evidence informed practice. *'Dialogue'*, he states, is creating and using opportunities to talk about learning and teaching, sharing craft knowledge, transferring and reinvesting intellectual capital. Through conversation there is a co- construction of professional knowledge and learning. Planning meetings, reviewing practice, jointly analysing data forms part of this. Dialogue is focused, but can be formal and informal.

For Southworth (2005) the task of learning centred leaders is to improve the quality of teaching in their schools by developing their teachers into effective professionals.

Monitoring by leaders, he states, should include identifying teachers' pedagogic strengths and development needs. Mentoring, coaching, and opportunities for teachers to improve their subject knowledge, teaching strategies and tactics should be provided.

He describes what leaders do in, what he terms, high performing schools. He says that they focus on what they can do and do not leave anything to chance regarding teaching and learning. Goals are set high and expectations matter. Principals are seen as very important but are *not* the only leaders in a school.

In such schools, according to Southworth (2005) teachers regularly observe other teachers, have time to plan and work collaboratively. Teachers take on many other leadership tasks. In good schools, he argues, leaders know how much teachers matter and act on that knowledge, creating a kind of shared sense of mission and camaraderie.

In conclusion, Southworth (2008) raises a number of questions, such as how teachers' craft knowledge in a school can be shared/ transferred ; how can it be strengthened and improved, and what obstacles are there to teachers sharing and developing their pedagogy? These questions, I argue, are crucially important with regard to the quality of teaching, and any effective answers to them are fundamentally bound up with the leadership practices in a school, and the organisational culture that pertains.

Southworth (2003) provides an analysis of three themes, namely, '*change*', '*leadership*' and '*learning organisations*' (in particular, learning schools) and their implications for learning centred leadership. An understanding of, and a willingness, by a school, to apply the advice/

implicit recommendations of this analysis would go some significant way, I argue, to ensuring that 'learning centred leadership' can become a working framework, of real benefit to a school, rather than just simply remaining, a model of leadership.

According to Southworth (2003), change, leadership, and learning organisations are bound together by a common thread, that is, learning. Change requires all to learn the way forward ; school leadership is fundamentally concerned with learning ; learning organisations (in particular, learning schools) are about creating the conditions and organisational capacity for all members of the school to be, what he terms, continuous learners. He sees learning as the key to improving/ transforming schools.

'Change,' Southworth (2003) argues that it is not an event, but a learning process. Learning, he states, is about participation in a constructive discourse, not via a process of transmission. He sees learning is an active process of mind, not a passive act of reception. He is critical of schools, as still resembling their 19th century origins in their practices and architecture. He regards changes in schools, which he advocates, being very much about teachers learning in collegial ways and collaborating.

'Leadership,' Southworth (2003) argues, is a contested concept, with no singular way of capturing it because it is pluralistic. It is many things. He believes that it is connected to human relationships, culture and the personal effectiveness of people and working communities. He states also, that leadership is strongly influenced by context.

In terms of school leadership, Southworth (2003) discusses four major ideas which he believes inform and guide thinking. i. e.

Situational or contingent. Leadership, he states, is contingent on the context and circumstances in which you work. Leadership depends in large measure where you are and with whom you are working.

Cultural. This, he says, refers to the importance of understanding, creating and changing organisational cultures. Schools, he states, are regarded as places where individuals construct their own meanings about the organisation but which are simultaneously contoured by the organisational values. Leaders, he sees, as exemplars of values and beliefs, and that they are closely observed to see whether their espoused values are consistent with daily actions.

Transformational. He sees attempts to transform the culture and social relations in an institution, not as an act of individual or charismatic leadership, but as a shared enterprise of teachers, students and the community. For him, it is concerned with developing a community of leaders. Leadership is seen as being exercised by many at different times and by individuals who are sometimes leaders; sometimes followers. In this way, he argues, leadership is distributed, occurs at all levels of the school, and has, what he terms, an 'emancipatory dimension.'

Instructional. As well as its focus on teaching and learning, there is need, according to Southworth(2003) to consider 'instruction' in a broad sense which includes organisational management, culture, and transformational issues also. Instructional leadership needs to be conceived broadly, he argues, but its distinctiveness needs to be retained; operating along and, as part of, other forms.

Instructional leaders, he states, focus on classrooms, and are interested in teaching and learning. They are though, he argues, also concerned with developing the quality and power of classroom processes and colleagues, since they wish to enhance a school's achievements, and to develop the school to meet the change forces of the present to prepare students for their tomorrows. He argues for a change of title because,

"instruction", he says, "is no longer the guiding star ; it is learning. If learning is the primary goal, then leadership should be thought of as being 'learning centred', rather than instructional". (Southworth,2003).

'Learning organisations' are ones, according to Southworth (2003), where, through the processes of learning centred leadership, teachers develop and deepen their craft knowledge and share intellectual capital as widely as they can. To do this, he argues, it is necessary to reconfigure the social architecture of schools and their cultures with collaborative teacher cultures, characterised by trust, security and openness. There is a need, he states, to ensure high levels of social capital.

Such schools, in his view, are outward looking and connected to other centres of learning. Networks exist, based on a common interest in educational issues, and which transcend regional boundaries, becoming national and international. He argues that learning schools provide the best environment for learning centred leadership, teacher development, school improvement and transformation.

To meet the challenges of change and prepare students for their futures, argues Southworth (2003) we need to transform schools. Leadership for transformation involves reconceptualising learning and teaching, 'reculturing' schools, transforming the workplace and workforce, and ensuring a strong focus on students' learning, and using this knowledge about learning to inform and develop teaching. Learning centred leadership, he believes,

lies at the heart of transforming schools. Such leadership, Southworth (2003) argues, is educative in intention and methods, for it puts the learning process at the heart of leadership and teacher development, while simultaneously transforming teachers and schools. To do this, he argues, leaders need to create learning schools.

Southworth (2003) draws a number of conclusions from his analysis (considered above). They are, meeting the challenge of change, places new demands on leaders in schools. Being a learning centred leader means, with others, simultaneously focusing on students' learning and enabling teachers to think about their teaching in the light of this. The more leaders are involved in each school, the better for teacher growth and classroom changes. There is a need for school leaders to be familiar with the latest ideas re learning, and to adopt a learning centred approach.

Learning centred leadership, not Principalship is advocated. The former, he states, will only flourish through a Principal's support and advocacy, because it relies on their modelling and monitoring.

It is important, he argues, for leaders to attend to teacher cultures in their school, creating as much trust and social capital as possible. A broad approach to leadership (including considerations of situation, culture and transformation), combined with strong/ persistent attention to student/ adult learning, including the learning of leaders, provides the enabling conditions for school growth.

To achieve teamwork with the optimum level of involvement, all, he says, need to be engaged from the early development stages of an initiative, Time is needed for ongoing dialogue ; input should be expected and valued. Leaders need to make clear what is being

done and why, as well as modelling. Monitoring is important, and dialogue needs to be structured and focused.

There should be a growing emphasis on capacity building, particularly leaders developing other leaders, and this may involve a change in the culture. In part, this will involve all teachers embracing responsibility for leadership, albeit in different ways. A new paradigm would be needed, based on enhanced concepts of professionalism, which may well, he states, challenge colleagues out of their comfort zones towards the desired direction.

Other writings that inform/ endorse Southworth's model

A number of other writings in the literature can be identified, either, as specifically endorsing Southworth's (2003) model of learning centred leadership, or, through their commonalities can be seen as supportive of its principles and practices.

For example, Hallinger (2012), one of the writers who informed Southworth's work, offers a synthesised model of 'leadership for learning'. He suggests leadership is enacted in an organisational and environmental context. He states that a school is part of its community, but also is part of the institutional system and social culture in which it operates, and the exercise of leadership is shaped by the personal characteristics of leaders, and both context and personal features moderate and shape their behaviours, and leadership does not directly impact on student learning, rather, this impact is mediated by school level conditions and processes. He identifies six interrelated leadership dimensions that make up this model, values and beliefs, vision/goals, leadership focus, building capacity, context for leadership, and sharing leadership.

There is similarity with the above model, to that of Murphy et al (2006) who provide an analysis of learning centred leadership. This resonates strongly with Southworth's work also.

Leadership to them is a set of processes involving influence, and which requires interactions and relationships among people. It also involves purpose, helping schools to move towards reaching desired goals. Leadership, thus defined, they state, "*..highlights the fact leadership can be shared amongst multiple actors and relies on complex, organic interrelationships between leaders and followers.*" (Murphy et al,2006)

From this position, Murphy et al (2006) observe that leadership behaviours are largely shaped by four conditions i.e. experience, knowledge, personal characteristics, and values and beliefs. After Hallinger and Heck (1999) they see the impact of leadership behaviours, in terms of valued outcomes, as indirect. It is mediated, they argue, by school operations and classroom activities. The model, they state, acknowledges that context is significant in the exercise of learning centred leadership.

Murphy et al(2006) in acknowledging the importance of leadership in schools, offer a knowledge base that is seen by them to underpin learning centred leadership. This comprises of eight major dimensions which may be seen as behaviours, characteristic of, and necessary to, the principles and practices of learning centred leadership. Their findings are based, they state, for the most part, on their review of a number of empirical studies ; the majority of which were qualitative. Their dimensions include the following, which I feel provide a particularly useful and detailed analysis that contributes to the further understanding of this theory of school leadership. i. e.

"Vision for Learning. Learning centred leaders are seen as being concerned with developing, implementing and stewarding a shared vision of learning that is supported by the school's community. The vision is articulated through modelling and communication with others. Their actions demonstrate the organisation's commitment to the values and beliefs of the mission, as well as the specific activities needed to reach agreed goals.

Instructional Program. Learning centred leaders model the importance of teaching by being directly involved in the design and implementation and monitoring of the instructional program. They visit classrooms and work with groups of teachers on instructional issues, both in formal and informal settings. Significant time is given, to supporting colleagues in their efforts to strengthen teaching and learning, to ensuring that teachers have opportunities to develop and enhance their skills, and, as leaders, to making themselves available to colleagues. Consistent and appropriate feedback about performance is provided to staff. This is based on classroom observations and evaluation strategies, with student learning being the focus of the dialogue.

Communities of Learning. Learning centred leaders are regarded as very skilful in creating learning organisations and fostering the development of communities of learning. At the broadest level, such leaders work to create a culture of collaboration and the systems, operations, and policies that provide the infrastructure for that collegial culture. A shared or team approach to leadership of the school is promoted.

Organisational Culture. There is an organisational orientation toward outcomes with learning centred leaders working hard to create an environment of high expectations and accountability for self, staff and students, and one of continuous improvement. Such leaders are seen as playing a central role in focusing staff and students on the agreed criteria for

success, through meetings, performance reviews, classroom observations, discussion of curricular content and practice, and in other interactions with staff. Learning centred leaders recognise the importance of cohesion, and work to create an organisational culture where teachers' work is influenced by the collective values and commitments of the school and where they see themselves as part of a wider organisation in pursuit of agreed goals." (Murphy et al, 2006)

In addition, a broad based empirical research study in urban schools on learning-focused leadership adds further insight with regard to the nature of the practices of this model. Knapp et al (2010) state that together, learning-focused leadership and leadership support, exercised by leaders at multiple levels of the system, constitute a major potential influence on learning improvement.

Further, Munby (2014) argues, that to deliver a sustained transformation of the educational system, at its heart must be high quality learning centred leadership and leaders. He stresses the importance of leaders being enthusiastic learners, and states that,

"Learning sits at the very foundation of a self improving educational system. It is by learning from one another- as teachers and leaders that we will generate the professional confidence and empowerment to chart the destiny of our educational system." (Munby,2014)

A critique of learning centred leadership

In contrast to Southworth's (2003) position (and others, who have endorsed his model) Male and Palailogue (2012) provide a critique of learning centred leadership. Their paper offers a critical review of models of learning centred leadership, and argues for a more holistic approach based on pedagogic knowledge and understanding.

They argue that leaders in educational contexts should be more concerned with pedagogic leadership than with models of learning centred leadership arising from the literature, as well as actions of central government. They propose, that for effective leadership in educational contexts, pedagogic leadership is a more accurate approach, given that it is concerned with the context, people, that is, the building of communities of learning and the development and construction of knowledge.

They argue that the ecology of the community, "the centrality of relationships with others", such as the learners, parents, community and government, and the building of a learning community, are of greater significance than are behaviours promoted through the model of learning centred leadership.

They further argue, that although learning centred leadership has been presented as a collective model that underpins and sustains improvement, it is limited and fragmented and fails to capture the changing nature of education, requiring a shift of emphasis onto process rather than outcomes, and onto learning about what it is, rather than on knowledge per se.

Pedagogic leadership, they suggest, is much closer to the contemporary nature of education. Instead of being concerned with the development of teaching and learning in education as the main focus of learning centred leadership, leaders, they argue, need to concern themselves with the development of epistemic agency, articulated as pedagogy.

They see learning centred leadership as largely facilitative, in creating the environment in which teachers are able to work more successfully with learners. Such facilitation is regarded as supportive, but bounded by the notion of an academic press, underpinned by

secure data systems and a combination of directive, collective leadership activities and the allocation of adequate resources.

The key elements in pedagogic communities, they argue, are people, context and knowledge, and suggest such communities empower individual people/learners by aiming to open dialogue, and focus on functions rather than on outcomes and outputs.

In contrast, learning centred leadership, to them, appears static as it may limit its focus to outcomes and outputs, rather than absorbing the whole process.

Male and Palialogue (2012) offer a range of attributes for pedagogic leadership which, they argue, are in contrast to education settings that have become preoccupied with the demands of outcomes and outputs. This latter situation they describe critically, as one in which learning centred leadership can be discerned.

I do not attempt to argue for the merits, or otherwise, of pedagogic leadership, as this is beyond the scope of my study, and perhaps my expertise also. I do believe though, that Male and Palialogue's (2012) critique of learning centred leadership, significantly underestimates the value and contribution to the education process, of this leadership model. Their criticisms, in my view, are narrow, and provide a flawed analysis in their placing of learning centred leadership within a limited outcomes and output frame. It perhaps could be argued that all human endeavours, and not least, educational ones, are ultimately concerned with outcomes. My review of other literature, locates learning centred leadership as a dynamic interactive process, centrally concerned with the leading of learning in schools, and all that that implies for a school and its leaders.

Male and Palialogue (2012) describe learning centred leadership as static, limited and fragmented, and go so far as to argue that elements of successful educational leadership are absent in this model. At the same time, they identify a range of features of their preferred model which they regard as being of benefit to the educational process. These include, for example, the building of learning communities, the development of 'agency', empowerment, collaborative working, collectivity, developing people, a concern with team building, and a concern with context.

I agree that such characteristics are of central importance to the development of educational communities and their leaders, but my concern is that in Male and Palialogue's,(2012) critique, they are regarded as absent in learning centred leadership contexts. They fail to acknowledge that these are among the very characteristics that underpin the principles and practices of learning centred leadership, and, as such, I argue, they are in error. Both theoretical and empirical evidence from my review of the literature support the nature of learning centred leadership (and the environments in which it occurs), as being underpinned by such characteristics, and in doing so, I argue, challenges, the position of Male and Palialogue(2012).

Further, I argue, learning centred leadership, in contrast to Male and Palialogue's (2012) description, can be more appropriately described as a process,

"where learning centred leaders, establish a community whereby all staff develop and improve their professional expertise, are effective learners themselves and model these behaviours, and help to lead the system and support future learning (of students and teachers)." (Munby, 2014).

Summary

A range of models of leadership have been considered, their commonalities and overlaps identified, and their features discussed, particularly in relation to implications for practice.

A number of models can be discerned from the literature. They offer definitions of leadership focusing on such as strategic, transformational, constructivist, distributed and learning centred. Although, as previously stated, I acknowledge that, as well as differences, there are commonalities between models (Swaffield and MacBeath, 2009).

Through my review of the literature I have come to see leadership as not being confined to the authority, skills, qualities etc, of one person, but rather, as centred on the actions of a group, or groups, contributing to a commonly agreed purpose, and not taking place in isolation, but in the context of institutions and their communities. Further, on the basis of my review, I argue, that the locus of learning centred leadership is found in a network of reciprocal relationships, and may be more usefully understood in this context.

School leadership then, and not least, learning centred leadership, can, I suggest, be regarded as a dynamic, concerned with changing cultures; a multi layered phenomenon that is context based, and one that is concerned with improving the process of schooling, i.e. the teaching and learning, that is occurring in a given time and place. Such a conceptualisation, I argue, may go some way in providing a working framework for my research.

Of the various models, it is 'learning centred leadership' that I will use for the purposes of my research. From my literature review, I have identified a number of themes in relation to learning centred leadership. The themes that have emerged, I argue, are representative of the principles and practices of this model. Furthermore, these themes reflect, if not embody, the 'strategies' put forward by Southworth (2003; 2008) and are concerned also

with (as he defines them) 'learning organisations'. Both are regarded by Southworth (2003 ; 2008) as integral to the successful practice of his model of learning centred leadership.

These themes, I argue, provide a relevant and appropriate framework for my research, and are of value in answering my research questions. The key themes are, Modelling, Monitoring, Dialogue, and The Learning Organisation. Within these themes, a number of sub themes may be noted also.

A commonality of themes has been noted in the various writings, and I respectfully acknowledge the value of the contributions that these writers make towards an analysis of the principles and practices of learning centred leadership. With the constraints though, of this small scale research exercise, I argue that it will be helpful to base my research on one model. It is Southworth's(2003) model that I will use as my meta theory, as an analytical tool. This is because I believe that it offers an appropriate framework for my research with its explicit focus on the key themes (as I have defined them) and his analysis of their importance to, and implications for, practice. These themes, as Southworth (2008) states, are informed by empirical evidence and, I argue, they encompass much of what makes up the principles, characteristics and practices of learning centred leadership. In addition, he provides a detailed consideration of the pre conditions for an organisational structure, the characteristics and features of which (he argues) are necessary to, and supportive, of the practice of learning centred leadership. Key questions, I believe, can be asked about the nature of these themes and their importance to the process of learning centred leadership, and by doing so, I suggest, they will usefully inform my research.

Research Questions:

My investigation seeks to answer the main research aim:

How is learning centred leadership developing in the school?

and a number of associated questions, seen as crucially important to the answering of my research aim.

1. How is the nature of the school's organisational structure, culture, and practices assisting the development of learning centred leadership?

2. How is the process of 'modelling' by leaders assisting the development of learning centred leadership?

3. How are the 'monitoring' practices of leaders in the school assisting the development of learning centred leadership?

4. How is 'dialogue' between colleagues contributing to the development of learning centred leadership in the school?

My research questions, I believe, were broad yet focused, and were able to be researched through the data collected. They were relevant and useful to a further understanding of the developing leadership roles of the participants. They were informed by, and had relevance to, questions, issues, findings and recommendations contained within my literature review, discussed previously. The themes which I identified subsequently from the data, are similar in nature to my research questions and accordingly, I argue, my findings, regarding them, will inform and assist in the answering of my research questions.

Chapter 3: Research Design/Methodology

Introduction

A variety of research design options are available to the researcher, and Crotty (1998) recommends that we should question which methods to use, as well as determining the perspectives which justify these choices. The importance of such considerations is acknowledged, and certainly, in respect of all research having the potential to be impacted by a researcher's initial beliefs & thoughts.

Positivism and the 'scientific method' has, over time, been largely influential in the development of quantitative research methods of social enquiry. At the same time, the tenets of this approach have been questioned by qualitative researchers. The virtues of the favoured approach of one of these two broad research methods have been championed by those who have followed it, while the other method has been seen in critical terms, if not in opposition, by those not subscribing to it.

It is beyond the scope of my study to discuss the merits of one approach over the other, but as I have, for reasons discussed below, adopted a qualitative approach to my research, I will attempt to put this in context.

My research demonstrates a central focus on examining the perspectives of the school's leaders charged with the responsibility of implementing the school's action plans (2015-2016). In being concerned with questions of 'how' and 'what' (rather than, 'how many') I believe that a qualitative approach is relevant for my purpose.

Ritchie et al (2014) state that,

"qualitative research is often described as a naturalistic, interpretative approach, concerned with exploring phenomena 'from the interior'(Flick,2009) and taking the perspectives and accounts of research participants as a starting point."

Further, in so far as qualitative research is about providing an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world of research participants by learning about their perspectives (Ormston et al, 2014) then this, I argue, provides an appropriate framework for my research.

Quantitative data may provide measures of 'success' in the school, but, I argue, it is unable to provide an account for 'how' and 'why' this is the case. A qualitative approach, focusing on the perceptions of the various actors in the school context, I suggest, is able to provide, what I believe, are crucially important dimensions to an understanding of (in this case) how learning centred leadership is developing in Buffett High School.

In essence, my research describes a process ; the leadership journeys of the actors. I have aimed to "capture" the movement in the professional learning of these colleagues as they develop as leaders of learning in the school. What they are doing. How they are doing it, and what has resulted, and what is being taken forward.

I acknowledge the crucial importance of so many other factors which interplay, and impact on a school's life and work, but, as stated previously, the specific context that I am researching is that which is concerned with the leadership practices of the Principal, the Assistant Principals and the Department Coordinators during the academic year 2015-16, in the social world in which they take place.

I located my research in a broadly interpretivist frame because this emphasised the importance of understanding people's perspectives in the context of their lives. A focus on

gaining an understanding of, and exploring, participants' views and experiences from *their* points of view is characteristic of this position, and was consistent with the context of my research.

I also considered the 'contextual' and 'evaluative' functions of research as these, I suggest, are particularly relevant. The former, is concerned with identifying what exists in the social world and the way it shows itself. In using a qualitative approach here, I believe I was able to explore, describe and portray the interpretations of my participants as experienced and understood by them. The latter function, specifically 'formative evaluation', focuses on providing information to help change or improve as necessary, a programme and its delivery. Using a qualitative approach here, has enabled me to gain some understanding of the leadership experiences and views of the participants in a more 'interactive' way, and allowed for an ongoing dialogue with the participants which I hoped would be of some value to them as they develop further, and reflect on, their leadership roles. As Abma and Widdershoven (2011) suggest, qualitative evaluation provides an understanding of the programme from the insider perspectives of the participants. Further, evaluating the school's practice 'with' rather than 'to' those school leaders involved, should have gone some way in providing data (being derived from their school context and, more so, from their own perspectives) that may be seen as being of benefit to the institution and the individuals involved in developing the practices of learning centred leadership.

The importance of the need for my investigation to have a clearly stated purpose, coherence and the capacity to generate data was fully considered, and I hope that this has been reflected in the following design. At the same time, I aimed for flexibility in my approach, to allow for consideration of other possible emerging 'avenues of dialogue'.

A rationale for the Research Design: some considerations

In thinking about the best way to approach my research, I took due cognisance of the points, as detailed in the following writings, and throughout, they have informed my planning, undertaking, and writing up of my research exercise.

As Denzin and Lincoln (2011) state,

"A complex , interconnected family of terms , concepts, and assumptions surround the term qualitative research". (p.3)

After Ormston et al(2014) a number of common characteristics of qualitative research can be identified. Aims and objectives are directed at providing an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world of the participants by learning about the sense they make of their social world, experiences, perspectives and histories. Methods of data generation are non-standardised, adaptable, and sensitive to both the participant and the social context of the study. Analysis respects the uniqueness of each participant as well as recurrent themes. There is openness to emergent categories at the analysis and interpretation stage. Detailed description of the phenomena being researched is grounded in the perspectives and accounts of the participants and, a reflexive approach is practised, where the researcher acknowledges their role and perspective in the research process.

Creswell (2013) argues that a basic premise of qualitative research is that different forms of it exist, and that the design of research within each has distinctive features. He advises that the research design process in qualitative research begins with philosophical assumptions that inquirers make in deciding to undertake a qualitative study. Researchers, he states, also bring their own world view, paradigms, or sets of beliefs to a research project, and that these inform the conduct and writing of a study. In many approaches to qualitative

research, he says, researchers use interpretive and theoretical frameworks to further shape their study.

Cresswell (2013) argues that good research involves making these assumptions, paradigms and frameworks explicit in the writing of a study, and at a minimum, be aware that they influence conduct of the inquiry.

He argues that there are five philosophical assumptions which lead to an individual's choice of qualitative research: ontology, epistemology, axiology, rhetorical and methodological.

The qualitative researcher, he says, chooses a stance on each of these.

My research is about how I can know and learn about the 'social world' of my participants and what is the basis of my knowledge formed from? As such, my taking an epistemological position in my research, using induction to build knowledge through interactions and observations of those in the social world (that is the subject of the research) seemed the most appropriate.

Within qualitative research, according to Ormston et al (2014) numerous schools of thought have emerged due to the different answers people have arrived at about the social world, its nature, what we can know about it, and how we have come to know about it. These 'schools' can be equally described as 'paradigms', 'theoretical positions,' or 'interpretive frameworks'.

From the number of paradigms (i.e. "*a basic set of beliefs that guide action.*") Guba, 1990:17) that can be identified as having influenced qualitative research to date, I will consider two, namely 'constructivism' and 'participatory', which I believe are of particular relevance to my research.

'Constructivism,' or, social constructivism, as Cresswell (2013) describes it, is, he states, often combined with 'interpretivism.' In this view, according to him, individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work, and develop subjective meanings of their experiences. Their meanings, he argues, are varied and multiple which leads the researcher to look for a complexity of views rather than narrow categories. The research goal, according to Cresswell (2013) is to rely, as much as possible, on the participants' views of the situation. These subjective meanings, he sees as being negotiated socially and historically ; formed through interactions with others, and through the historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives.

Constructivist researchers look at the processes of interaction among individuals, focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the cultural settings of the participants, and inductively develop a pattern of meaning. (Crotty, 1998 ; Cresswell, 2013).

Objective value-free research is not possible or intended. Researchers here, also have to recognise that their own background shapes their interpretation, and the aim is to make sense (or 'interpret') the meanings others have about the world.

As knowledge is created from the engagement of individuals and groups with their perceived reality of the world, any claim of an objective truth is rejected. Reality may therefore be seen as continually evolving as social interactions occur. In terms of Buffett High School's leaders, their perceptions, and the meanings that come from their experiences, are not regarded as objective truths, but rather as coming from an individual or social contextualisation i. e. the school context in which they practice leadership. My

research therefore, sought to understand the nature of this phenomenon, and its relation to the development of learning centred leadership in the school.

The basic tenet of a 'Participatory' paradigm is that research should contain an action reform agenda that may change the participants' lives and institutions in which they work. (This paradigm is more commonly applied to the supporting of marginalized individuals or groups, but I believe that its tenet, and its features, essentially, had relevance for my research).

Both these qualitative research paradigms, I believe, mirror closely the nature of my research, its aims and associated practices, and in doing so, contribute to a suitable research design for my study. Researchers may use multiple paradigms in their qualitative research that are compatible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011 ; Cresswell, 2013). I believe compatibility to be the case with the constructivist and participatory paradigms, and accordingly, they were used in my research.

A theoretical perspective can be described as a way of looking at something based on a set of assumptions, in order to provide meaning. After careful consideration of my rationale (above) and the implications for research inherent within it, I believe that my qualitative research study was best served by an interpretivist theoretical perspective, one that focuses on understanding human 'lived experience' from the perspectives of those who hold it, and one that recognises understanding as being contextually bounded. As such, I adopted this perspective for my research.

In deciding to use a constructivist interpretivist approach in my research, I recognised that the data I collected would be qualitative, that my research would take place in a natural

setting, and that my methodology should offer, for example, openness and flexibility, and allow for the emergence of themes identified from the narratives of my participants.

Additionally, in valuing and using the narratives of participants as data, I believe that this may provide a greater understanding of the phenomena under consideration in the context of peoples' own accounts, and may offer a more 'authentic' meaning than one which is derived from a 'user- led' approach. (There are similarities here to 'narrative' research, but I do not claim that this emphasis in my research in any way fully models this approach).

Methodology:

The decision to use 'Action Research' as the methodology for my study was based on my belief that it best enabled me to progress my research from more general considerations to an operational investigation of the phenomena under investigation. The rationale for this decision was informed by Torbert and Taylor's (2008) work on action inquiry, which they state, "*is based in a holistic understanding that also tries to act and inquire at the same time*" (p.241). I will now attempt to define action research and its purpose, and offer a summary of its main features, which hopefully will demonstrate the relevance of this process for my research.

What is Action research ?

Lewin (1946) proposed a cyclical, iterative approach to research, involving planning what was to be done, taking action and fact finding about the results. His ideas have become key influences of what is now termed, 'action research'. For example, Elliott (1991) sees action research as,"..... *the Study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action*

within it." He regards the 'validity' of the "theories" that it generates depending not so much on "scientific" tests of truth, as on their usefulness in assisting people to act more intelligently and skilfully.

The 'collaborative' and 'change agent' nature of action research is emphasised by a number of writers, who in doing so provide further insight regarding this process. For example,

Gilmore, Kranz and Ramirez(1986) state that,

" ...there is a dual commitment in action research to study a system and concurrently to collaborate with members of the system in changing it in what is together regarded as a desirable direction. Accomplishing this twin goal requires the active collaboration of researcher and client, and thus it stresses the importance of co-learning as a primary aspect of the research process" (p.161)

Action Research: The Process:

Kemmis and McTaggart (1998) state that action research is thought to involve a spiral of self reflective cycles. Each cycle has four steps: plan, act, observe, reflect. During the 'planning' stage an action plan is developed. This is followed by the 'action' stage when the plan is implemented, whilst recognising the importance of flexibility and judgement. The action should be accompanied by the monitoring and observation of results. 'Observation' feeds into the next stage of the cycle, and becomes the basis for reflection. The final stage is 'reflection' in which the group (and the researcher) collaboratively analyse, synthesise, interpret, explain and draw conclusions about what has been achieved and identify possible ways of moving forward. Another cycle may be set in motion, depending on outcomes.

(Rose et al,2015)

The features of Action Research

Kemmis and McTaggart (1998) summarised the key principles of action research. Among them are, that action research, develops through the self reflective spiral, is an approach to improving education by changing it and learning from the consequences of such changes, is participatory, through which people work towards improving their own practices (and secondarily, other people's) establishes self- critical learning communities of people participating and collaborating in all phases of the research process, and is a systematic learning process in which people act deliberately, though remaining open and responsive.

In addition, I suggest, that in taking action to change improve practice, new knowledge is generated about how and why change came about. The action orientation makes it appropriate for investigating 'how' and 'why' questions about the nature of changes in institutions and those concerned with professional practice. It is 'context sensitive', and there is a need to contextualize the research process to give meaning to findings.

Summary:

The features of action research considered above, I argue, demonstrate, a close relation to my research focus. Its purposes, and practices are highly consistent with my research design, and provided a relevant framework in which I was able to conduct my research. After Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) one of the purposes of action research is, *"To plan, implement and evaluate an intervention designed to improve practice.."* Accordingly, I believe action research offered me an appropriate methodology.

At the same time, I believe, I needed to ensure that my research practice reflected the following considerations.

An action research project involves iterations of the four stage cycle and it was important throughout, to emphasize the collaborative nature of the process, and encourage dialogue and participation. Gheradi (2001) discusses the social construction of knowledge within a 'situated practice'. If new knowledge can come from 'multiple perspectives and negotiations' rather than, for example, an individual researcher, it was therefore important to consult with, and keep all concerned, involved in the process.

As an action research methodology is about improving an aspect of practice through a process of reflection and revision of practice at various stages, it was important that this process was able to contribute to my practice and, that it should inform theory and practice to assist the development of the practice of others.

I looked to apply the three underlying principles of action research, namely 'reciprocity', 'reflection' and 'reflexivity' in my research practice.

I acknowledged the importance of reciprocity, in that my research was of relevance to the participants, making it clear that we would exchange the results of our 'action' for mutual benefit, with the purpose of assisting in leadership development.

Action research is seen as a useful reflective methodology (Elliott, 1991 ; Edwards and Talbot, 1999) In reflecting, I aimed to move beyond description, and sought to reflect critically, in particular, with regard to how in my research context, theory could inform practice.

In recognising that reflexivity is an attempt to identify and do something about the limitations of the research exercise, I acknowledged that a value-free position of neutrality could not be assumed, but rather, there was a need to analyse my own role and influence in

this process, and to become critically aware of my values and how these affected my interpretation of the data. As Finlay (2002) argues, the process is challenging and subjective, and its ambiguous nature is contested. Being reflexive though, may have helped improve my professional understanding and practice, by enabling me to investigate my own perspectives.

It was necessary also, to acknowledge some disadvantages of action research, perhaps as a way to minimize their perceived negative impact.

Selepe, (2001) argues that the limitations of a methodology heavily relying on qualitative data are that no statistical claims or generalisations can be made. Given its focus on a particular context, questions can be asked regarding the relevance of any findings beyond the immediate research setting. It is claimed that it is unscientific (at least in terms of the positivist approach to research).

The key principles of action research (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1998) discussed above , I argue, provided an adequate justification for me, of what this process is and does, and its value as a research methodology.

Ethics:

I adhered to The Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA, 2011) and ethical approval (CUREC.1) was obtained from the University of Oxford, Central University Research Ethics Committee for my research study.

Accordingly, I ensured that I informed participants of the nature and purpose of my research and obtained their voluntary consent as participants. Detailed discussion took place with all relevant parties allowing a fully informed consent to be given.

(The Principal informed his co- leaders about the proposed action research, and offered them the opportunity to participate. After further dialogue, all the relevant colleagues gave voluntary and informed consent, and looked forward to being involved. They fully understood what the research is about, that they could withdraw if they wished, and that no personal details or sensitive data would be collected).

Participants were treated with respect, including their privacy, their right to withdraw from the study, and with regard to any burden that participation may cause. I emphasised to them, their value as individuals and fellow professionals, and that they, and I, would not cause their professional role to be diminished in any way by involvement in the research process.

I avoided any form of deception, by making clear the precise nature and purpose of the study, including how and what data will be collected, and how it may be used in the future. I assured participants that their anonymity was protected, and that data collected would be about the nature of professional practice, and would be obtained from observations and the personal accounts of the various school leaders.

Any data I captured during my research (i.e. from interviews, field observations, and school documentation) would be written up from personal note taking, and word processed on a personal computer. The data would then be stored as a file in my documents on my computer, which would provide a secure site, accessible only by a personal password.

It is important to acknowledge that action research is undertaken in real-world contexts and is concerned with close and open communication among the 'actors' involved, and accordingly, participants must be allowed to influence the work. At the same time, the development of the work must remain visible and open to suggestions from others.

O'Hanlon (2003) argues that action research is risky and morally challenging, and its nature may cause personal concerns to be shared. Also, that the process may be seen as having political implications, as decisions made by researchers affect others, and that involvement in the process might expose participants to an inaccurate reflection being made of their professional skills. These points I grappled with, in terms of my research role, and considered also whether these were felt to be an issue by others. I took due note of such ethical concerns, and ensured that they did not form any part of my practice. I remain absolutely certain of the integrity of the institution in which my research took place.

The perspectives of Locke et al (2013) and Mockler (2014) provided analyses of ethical issues in action research which have informed both the thinking and practice of my research.

The collaborative nature of action research, according to Locke et al (2013) 'problematise' the question of who is the researcher and who are the researched. This, they say, raises questions of anonymity, ownership of findings and the dissemination of same. They advocate a set of eight ethical principles for collaborative action research, respect all in the group, all are full members, ownership of data and its dissemination should involve consultation with all stakeholders, a right to withdraw from the process or renegotiate, understandable communication, collaborative judgement of whether the research aims are morally right- 'a principle of right action', transparency- a principle of critical self reflexivity, and a right to have feelings respected, and that they count as research information.

For Mockler (2014) good research practices adhere to a framework of quality guided by ethics. She sees practice as a way of understanding and enacting ethical practice where professional formation is shaped reflexively through the learning that takes place in the

contexts of research and practice. Ethics therefore, might function as a framework for quality and process in practitioner research.

Collaborative practitioner inquiry, she argues, provides a context within which participants might make joint decision about collecting evidence, and engage together in debating its meaning and constructing a response. This requires, she says, a level of trust invested within the 'research group'.

There is a need to ensure a quality of purpose, she further argues, to ensure that evidence being gathered from the research, emanates from the genuine concerns of the school community. This 'authenticity' is also, importantly about engaging with the research process to collect evidence which is not just that to be celebrated, but that which can develop an understanding of more problematic issues.

My involvement in the Action Research process:

An associate role at Buffett High School throughout the academic year has allowed me to work alongside the Principal particularly, and with other school leaders. This involvement, though not on a day to day, face to face basis, however, has enabled me, I argue, to 'explore' the collaborative working of a group of leaders as they considered, challenged and changed existing school practices in their addressing of the implications of the school's three action plans for 2015-16. Alongside this focus, I was able, through my research, to describe their leadership journeys.

An action process was clearly discernible in the school throughout the year, and consisted of three cycles taking place across the three semesters (**Ref. Appendix 1: Framework of Action Cycles:1-3, Buffett High School, 2015-16**).

Reflection from the third cycle has lead to plans which are evolving, at this point, into a further cycle, or cycles, in the new school year, concerned with the school's continuing developments.

A framework of training days and meetings, both monthly and weekly operated throughout the year and facilitated the action cycles. (Ref. **Appendix 2: Calendar of Meetings, 2015-16**).

Throughout the school year I was involved in ongoing dialogue and discussions with the Principal, and at various times, with his colleague leaders in the school. This took place regularly, and included face to face, telephone, and e mail conversations. As such, I was able to be involved be involved in the 'action' of Buffett High School.

In particular, key aspects of practice, such as the introduction of the action plans by the various leaders, how this was done, how leadership was modelled in doing this, how these interventions were monitored, and what was the nature of dialogue with colleagues, provided a focus for discussion and contribution. Essentially, it was collaborative working, exploring the nature and practice of leadership in the school's context.

A leader has taken action. It was reflected on, and critically reviewed. This informed further planning, interventions, and, accordingly, future action. I was closely involved in this cyclic process, and hope I provided a valuable additional leadership perspective for my American colleagues. One, through which we considered, and reflected on, the nature of their professional practice, and how this may have contributed to their development as leaders of learning and, as such, supported the development of learning centred leadership in the school.

Dialogue took place between these colleagues and myself, during which their existing practices were considered, and how these had changed, or, were to change. Evidence was gathered over time, via a range of data which allowed me to 'view' the school's planning process, and its proposed, and actual, changes in practice. This enabled me, I suggest, to gain some insight and understanding, and make some contribution, as to the significance of these 'actions', with regard to the development of learning centred leadership among these leaders.

I have reflected on my methodology, in terms of my role as a researcher involved in an action research process. In many respects, due to a long standing relationship with Buffett High School, I am regarded by colleagues there, very much as an 'insider', and I remain most thankful for their trust. I am though, from a practical point of view, an 'outsider', for I am not a member of staff at the school. I have undertaken an associate role this past year, with the kind permission of the School District Superintendent and the Principal of the school. Quite properly, I initially approached the school as to whether my proposed research could be of interest or value to the school and if so, if I could be given permission to carry out my research. Following permission, it was important (after, Locke et al, 2013) to recognise that my research topic may not be the highest priority with colleagues at the school, and that there was need to negotiate the nature of this, seek to establish a 'membership' of those to be involved in the action research, and build collaborative partnerships with them. Fortunately, past history was helpful, in that a willingness to be involved was forthcoming from the school's leaders, many of whom I had worked with previously for some considerable time. At the same time, the nature of my research investigation was seen to have some relevance to the school's development plans, in terms of leadership roles and

development. As such, I was able (with the cautionary provisos discussed above) to undertake my research, using my planned methodology for which I was most grateful.

Data collection methods:

Creswell (2013) advises that purposely selected sites or individuals should be identified for a proposed study. He argues that the idea behind qualitative research is to purposely select participants or sites that will best help the researcher understand the problem and research question. In this context he advocates four aspects, identified by Miles and Huberman (1994) i.e. the setting, the actors, the events, and the process.

The setting for my action research study is context specific i.e. the school, in which the participants undertake their professional practice. The actors are the school leaders, the events are the collecting of the data about what the leaders are doing, and the process is collecting data about the evolving nature of events undertaken by the leaders i.e. how their developing roles and practices are delivered and received.

Sample:

My sample consisted of nineteen participants who are regarded as the key leaders at Buffett High School i. e. the Principal, the two Assistant Principals and sixteen Department Coordinators (four Core Coordinators, and twelve other Coordinators including Special Education). It is an example of purposive sampling (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000 ; Bryman,2012) with the participants selected because of their typicality and relevance to the specific focus of my research i.e. learning centred leadership.

This sample met my needs as a researcher, and was deliberately selective. The intention was not to represent the wider population (but yet this may be seen by some as a weakness in the methods I have used).

The participants were selected because of their direct involvement in this aspect of the school's practice i.e. leadership, and because I felt that their perspectives (gained from firsthand experience as actors in this situation) would provide the potential for data that could most usefully inform the school in relation to learning centred leadership, and perhaps, inform its future planning and development also.

Nature of data:

I chose to collect 'generated data,' that is data arising in the research process through an interaction between the researcher and the participant. My preference for this over naturally occurring data was because it allowed the participants to describe the personal and organisational context under consideration, and gave them an explicit chance to give their own meanings and interpretations through their responses. Although I accept that to some extent I will have 'interpreted' the data, it is the participants' personal interpretation, as provided in their accounts, which I regard as being highly significant.

Types of Data collected:

As action research, I argue, requires a broad based approach, rather than a single method for collecting and analyzing data, accordingly I sought to collect a range of data.

Interviews: I used in- depth, open-ended interviews to collect the 'generated data'. These are regarded as a powerful method in qualitative research for generating description and

interpretation of a person's social world (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). After Kavle (1996) I note that the interview is part of a seven stage investigation.

Observations. Field notes were taken on the activities of the participants at the research site i. e. at the school. Largely, I adopted the role of non-participant observer in observing a training day, a range of meetings, and the interactions of actors with colleagues (within and outside of meetings).

Documents. A range of school documents were examined, and included: Principal and Department Coordinator meeting agendas; Principal and Core Coordinator meeting agendas and Faculty meeting agendas, Training day booklet, the Principal's end of year, personal review and reflection statement, end of year summaries/ progress reports of the three action plans.

Research journal: I kept this as a tool to record the dialogues I had had with leaders at the school, and to record the field notes from my observations. By referring to my journal, I was able, to reflect on these interactions and observations, in my interpreting of this data.

Figure 1. School Development Framework/ Data Collection Schedule, 2015-16

Date	Activity/ Involvement	Data source
Summer, 2015 June-Administrators' Retreat, devising of the 3 Action Plans July- Principal interview	Initial dialogue with Principal re, school's development priorities	Research journal- field notes of interview
Autumn, 2015 Action Cycles 1&2- operative	Continued dialogue with Principal (and colleagues as appropriate) re (i) school's developments, and (ii) role of Department Coordinators	Research journal- field notes of conversations

	re leading the introduction and implementation of the 3 Action Plans	
Spring, 2016 Action Cycle 3 - operative	Main data collection. Interviews with Principal, Assistant Principals and Department Coordinators. Observations. Collection of school documentation.	Research journal- interview transcripts - field notes of observations
Summer, 2016 Action Cycle 3- continuing. End of year reflection on leadership/school developments. Action Plans for 2016-17. May July	Further data collection Follow up interviews with Assistant Principals and Department Coordinators. Ongoing dialogue with Principal.	Review of school documentation. - interview transcripts - interview transcript
Autumn, 2016 Plan for sharing findings.	Informal discussion with Principal re findings. Presentation of research findings to District Superintendent, Principal and colleagues. Discussion- re future implications.	Research study data. Research study data

Summary

The small scale focus of this action research exercise was acknowledged, and that a range of evidence was important to verify my findings. A collection of data types were seen to assist the reliability and validity of my findings, and, as such, to clarify meaning and to ensure that multiple perceptions were considered. I used triangulation to cross verify my data and bring credibility to my results. As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) state, triangulation is an,

"attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint".(p.112)

Further, naturalistic approaches, of which mine is an example, may be considered to have a weakness in clarity as they are open to multiple perceptions, with a possible variety of interpretations, sometimes contradictory in nature. Triangulation, I suggest, reduced this concern and was helpful in the context of my research.

Data Analysis:

In analysing the data, I undertook a number of processes and procedures to assist me in moving from the data that I had collected, to a position where I could offer some explanation, understanding or interpretation of the participants' perceptions and situation that I was investigating.

As Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000 state, the analysis of qualitative data,

"... is almost inevitably interpretive, hence the data analysis is less a completely accurate representation but more of a reflexive, reactive interaction between the researcher and the decontextualized data that are already interpretations of a social encounter." (p.147)

The above is my understanding of the nature of the data that my research generated. My analysis, I suggest, was substantive in approach, in seeking to demonstrate, through the data, the reality of the social world of the participants and their feelings and perceptions.

In analysing the data, I used 'content analysis' to help make sense of the data I had collected, and to highlight the important messages, features and findings that came from it. In using this technique, I was able to interpret meaning from the content of the text data (drawn from interview transcripts, observation notes and documentation) and, as such, adhere to a naturalistic paradigm.

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) identify two forms of content analysis, 'conventional' and 'directed'. With the former, coding categories derive directly from the text, while with the latter, analysis begins with a theory or relevant research findings as guidance for the initial codes. My coding of the data was certainly informed by findings from my review of the literature, and, as such, I used a 'directed' approach.

Content analysis can also be considered in terms of two levels. A basic level which is descriptive of what was said, with no comment on why or how, and a more interpretive higher level, concerned with the response of the participant, and what may have been inferred. In my analysis of the data, I used both basic and higher level analysis to assist me.

In using content analysis (a procedure for the coding and categorisation of data for the purposes of classification, summarisation and tabulation) I looked for themes in the data by using a coding system to identify and classify similar and different ideas in the text. I then grouped together the ideas, and gathered evidence about these views which I categorised into a number of themes.

My data analysis was informed by this position, and I adopted, within my content analysis, what can be termed a 'thematic analysis' approach, which aimed to discover, interpret and report patterns of meaning within the data. I examined the texts generated by my participants, to identify topics that I was able to locate into key themes which assisted in answering my research questions.

Such analysis is about turning written data into findings. My aim was to enrich my findings with information (that quantitative approaches, for example, do not always provide) in order to better understand the culture and experiences of participants.

In using this approach to data analysis, I addressed 'data management' through a number of stages (Cohen, Manion and Morrison , 2000 ; Spencer et al, 2014). The five step approach of Spencer et al (2014) to manage data provided a helpful basis for my thinking and practice in this regard , i. e. *familiarisation, drawing up an initial thematic framework, indexing and sorting, reviewing examples of data, and, producing a data summary and display.*

The stages in my data analysis: an account of the steps I took

During this process though, it became clear that the steps of analysis were not always linear, and so I engaged in smaller cycles of analysis. At the same time, I critically reflected on the data, returned to this again for further reflection, discussed my analysis with colleagues, and so on.

I examined the data that had arisen from my dialogues, interviews, observations, research journal, and school District/school documentation, and made detailed notes on this.

(Appendix 3 : A sample from notes, initial dialogue with Principal, Buffett High School, July 2015)

During observation visits I made 'field notes'. After my observations, I wrote up the field notes in more detail, and prepared memos to capture the essence of what I had experienced/ learned. The memos assisted in identifying the main codes for the data, and were a useful aid to recalling key issues. This enabled me to begin the process of coding and analysis **(Appendix 4: A sample of field notes, observation of Training Day, March 2016).**

Similarly, I wrote memos after interviews, and after examining the documentation. This assisted me with the coding process, also **(Appendix 5: A sample of a memo, re documentation analysis, April, 2016).**

In addition, I produced 'data information sheets' which summarised details of my research activity on the various occasions. These contained, for an interview, details about the participant's role and responsibilities, the location and date of interview, and, for an observation, details of those present, and their key roles in the process. They served as a helpful aide memoire in my coding procedures, and enabled a practical means to cross check contextual and demographic data, and where I had located various data. **(Appendix 6: A sample of a data information sheet, interview, March, 2016).**

I then reviewed the data (a number of times, as stated above) and began the process of coding my observation field notes, interview transcripts, entries in my journal, and documentation **(Appendix 7: List of initial codes used in research analysis)**. In acknowledging that coding is more than simply organising data, in that it can assist the process of analysis, it was necessary to code the data in detail, coding it according to the types of ideas/issues that emerged. **(Appendix 8: A sample of a coded transcript from an interview, March, 2016).**

Following my compiling of an initial list of codes (which offered a useful foundation for the interpretive analysis I had undertaken) and a further consideration of the data, I developed a number of descriptive categories that demonstrated the range of views of my participants. After Dey (1993) I considered the linkage between these categories. From these categories, themes were then identified.

I summarised a number of themes, noting the occurrence of each theme in the data, and looked for the range of views among my participants. (The themes are discussed in Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion, below).

I then went on to interpret my findings. I was aware that an interpretation of data goes beyond description, and so therefore, I aimed to make sense of my findings by offering explanations. In the discussion of my findings (Chapter 4) I sought to confirm that the findings were supported by the data, remove any misconceptions, and provide a clarity of their meaning in the context of my research.

To assist this process, I triangulated my data (a process of combining methods with types of data sources) in order to cross- check my results, to confirm similarities, patterns or differences, and to identify how widespread certain impacts or outcomes were. For example, I compared themes identified in observation with themes with those from interviews.

After having identified the research findings from my analysis, and summarised and discussed them, I then drew some conclusions about the development of learning centred leadership at Buffett High School (Chapter 5).

(It is noted that findings will be communicated with stakeholders subsequently, and feedback encouraged. It is hoped that where further areas of research are needed, these can be identified, and translated into an appropriate action plan).

Both my research design and methodology and the analysis of the data, was informed by dialogue with the Principal and a number of his leadership colleagues. Their wise counsel as critical friends and professional associates is gratefully acknowledged, as is their assistance that helped me manage the research/data collection exercise within the school. The subsequent findings from my research are discussed below.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

My data analysis has enabled me to identify a number of themes, regarding learning centred leadership. The data also confirmed a close correspondence with those themes that I had discerned from my review of the literature on learning centred leadership, and particularly, from Southworth's (2003;2008) work.

I will discuss my findings in relation to the following themes: 1. The Learning Organisation ; 2. Modelling practices ; 3. Monitoring practices ; and, 4. The nature of Dialogue. My findings and discussion, with regard to these themes, will be based on the various types of data that I collected, and I will draw on evidence from each of the following, as appropriate i. e. interviews, observations, research journal and examination of documentation.

The narrative of my findings will be structured around the three population groups who were the focus of my research, The Principal, The Assistant Principals, and the Department Coordinators, and also, will be presented largely, as a chronological structure.

Theme 1. *The Learning Organisation:*

The crucial importance of the learning organisation in respect of learning centred leadership is clear in Southworth's (2008) analysis. Such organisations are seen to have defining characteristics, which are the necessary preconditions for learning centred leadership to occur, develop and thrive. They are characterised as places that are bound by learning, with a culture of professional commitment to develop practice, and build collaborative cultures, and increase professional and social capital through shared agency. The various features of the learning organisation, I have grouped as four sub themes of this first theme. My findings are as follows.

Organisational structure: sub theme

In Buffett High School's organisational structure, each of the leaders has a clearly defined role and responsibility, fundamentally concerned with ensuring that the school's teaching and learning goals are achieved. Evidence of this came from an initial dialogue with the Principal in July 2015. Detailed notes from this meeting provided a comprehensive picture of the school's structure (Appendix 3: A sample from notes, initial dialogue with Principal, July, 2015). This evidence was supported by data from subsequent interviews, observations, and school documentation.

The Principal's primary responsibilities are for the school's instructional programme (curriculum) and, to ensure that this is taught in a building which operates as a safe and orderly environment for learning. In undertaking these responsibilities he stated that he works closely with his other key leaders, who have direct responsibilities for specific aspects of the instructional programme and/or student and building management.

A system of meetings is operative where the Principal meets regularly with his Assistant Principals, daily and weekly, and with the Department Coordinators on a monthly basis. In addition, the Core Department Coordinators (four in number) meet on a monthly basis with the Principal. The data provide evidence of an organisational structure which has encouraged strong collaboration to be embedded into the school's working practices, and one, where the process of teaching and learning, and its practice in the school, are central to its agenda. Meetings are concerned with educational matters, and how best to progress with these. A collegial environment was evident in colleagues' willingness to work with, and support one another. Leaders were able to plan collaboratively, and the importance of capacity building was recognised.

The Principal sees his role as more than facilitating developments in the school, and is widely engaged as a co leader across the school's developments, both directly and indirectly. He sees one of his main objectives to, *"support teachers with skills, ideas and consistent accountability"* (Principal).

Interviews with the Assistant Principals (March, 2106) proved informative about the school's organisational structure, and the data is illustrative of their wide ranging involvement in this. Among their responsibilities, the Assistant Principals have day to day leadership responsibility for the administration of the building, and for student management and related matters, including home and school communication. They have an important role also, in supervising and supporting the various departments.

Additional evidence of the school's organisational structure was discerned from the data of the interviews with the Department Coordinators which took place in the spring of 2016..

The responses of the Department Coordinators confirmed their key roles within the school's organisational structure. That is, the establishing of a vision for their department, leading their team of practitioners, supporting existing instructional programmes, and exploring and developing new programmes.

An observation (March, 2016) of a weekly meeting between the Principal and his Assistant Principals (attended also, by a Department Coordinator, who also holds a District Curriculum Supervisor role) offered the opportunity to experience an example of professional practice which has emanated from the school's organisational structure. The meeting remained focused throughout, on school -based educational issues, including discussion about the

school's developments and their impact on practice. Culture change issues, and leadership responses to this, were central to the agenda.

My field notes from the observation referred to a matter raised in the meeting about concern from some of the school staff over workload, and some trepidation about the school's Action Plans. These issues were reflected on by the attendees, and the Principal offered to attend Department meetings to answer questions regarding the school's developments, and acknowledged that, "*there are continued challenges about what we are trying to accomplish*" (Ref. field notes, observation, 4 March, 2016). The response by these leaders seems to support, their desire to engage with and support colleagues in a collaborative context. A stronger reflection perhaps, is that the response from the meeting is illustrative of leadership as an activity, concerned with influencing and developing others.

My findings, from examining the documentation, highlight the centrality and importance of the school's development priorities (the Action Plans) to its practice as a learning organisation. For example, Agendas of the Department Coordinators' Meetings, 2015-16, provide data which show that these meetings clearly focus on the school's developments, and the role of leaders in this process. The structure of each meeting provides for an update on the three Action Plans, discussion re. the Curriculum and Assessment, and a focus on Leadership and the Coordinator's role (which includes group based activities). Also, my memo (Ref. Appendix 5) regarding a Department Coordinators' Meeting (March, 2016) supports the view of an organisational structure in which collaborative working is taking place. In addition, observation of a Department Coordinators' Meeting (Spring, 2016) provided further insight of an organisational structure that was creating opportunities for an increase in professional and social capacity.

The data, I believe, demonstrate the professional commitment on the part of the Principal, and that of his fellow leaders, to lead, support and develop practice, through the school's organisational structure, in order to achieve the school's development goals. Further, that the school's organisational structure has enabled practices, seen as characteristic of a learning organisation, to have become integral to its operation.

Culture: sub theme

My findings are indicative of a school culture which may be described as one where there is professional commitment to developing and improving practice through collaborative cultures, based on trust, within and across departments, and across the school as a whole.

For example, a Department Coordinator commented that,

"There is a team approach, a lot of cohesion. After Coordinator training for leadership, I worked with the information with department members in our content area. I believe we have the professional freedom to adapt. They trust us to be experts in our content level. We are working together as a team, there is a high degree of cooperative working."

Another, spoke of a culture of collaboration in which, *"we have to intertwine and make these connections, otherwise there is isolation,"* and of a culture of trust, *"where people are not embarrassed to ask and expose themselves over things they are not good at."*

Leadership in the school is designated as individually held posts, but in practice, a collective endeavour can be discerned, one that is being distributed to build professional capacity.

Leadership can be seen to be broadening, with colleagues being supported and encouraged to develop and deepen their professional knowledge and skills, through involvement in a shared mission, and, through contributing to changing the culture to one of shared enterprise, to undertake leadership roles. Observation of the Training Day (March, 2016) provides evidence of this (Ref. Appendix 4).

Also, as a Department Coordinator commented,

"through a very supportive Administration we have been able to facilitate growth. Leaders of learning are emerging in the department and beyond. Response to challenge and change has led people not to keep the same role, and as such, encouraged them to show their passion and lead on this."

As I further reflect on my findings, I recognise a supportive culture at Buffett High School, one in which leaders are involved in learning, and one in which new leaders are emerging.

Context: sub theme

Buffett High School introduced three Action plans for the academic year 2015-16 in

August, 2015. These overarching plans required major involvement of staff in collaborative

working. The data (Ref. Appendix 1: Framework of Action Cycles 1-3, Buffett High

School, 2015-16) offer evidence of a school framework in which the plans are being

delivered through a three cycle process, each comprising of four stages. In practice, this

process has needed people to share their knowledge and skills, thereby distributing

professional intelligence. As one Department Coordinator commented,

"we can't get all this done as successfully as we want without working together."

More so, data from interviews with the various Department Coordinators, regarding the

contribution of their departments, to the wider school process would seem to demonstrate

the significance of the micro context within the school. For example a Department

Coordinator commented that,

" some department members will step up as to how it is done, and become leaders, confident in their content areas."

Another similarly, drew attention to their working context,

" the only way to achieve goals is working as a team. This allows department members to have ownership in the work they are doing."

The Action Cycle process would seem to demonstrate a context in which colleagues are working collaboratively. The findings from my observations (March, 2016) of a Training day and a Department Coordinators' meeting, are supportive of this view. Given the whole school focus and breadth of these initiatives, this process may be seen to be contingent on the context of the school.

Learning centred leaders: sub theme

A task of learning centred leaders, I suggest, is to improve the school's teaching quality through developing its staff.

During an interview (Spring, 2016) the Principal highlighted the importance of capacity building. The school's decision to modify its plans and establish five training days was to provide time,

" for Department Coordinators to gain the necessary background knowledge on curriculum and assessment, and prepare them to lead it." What we are doing, is bringing a greater purpose to the context in which I am trying to develop them as teacher leaders". Previously leadership development was in isolation. Now there is a whole different richness to our conversation. They will be looking through the lens of leading a department through this curriculum process." (Principal)

To deliver the school's three action plans, the school identified that leaders were needed to

lead the learning and development of staff. Data from a number of sources (e.g. interviews, observations) provide evidence of organisational learning, and the existence of learning networks, being actively led by a range of leaders.

Further consideration of the interview data helped provide a greater clarity of the participants' perspectives. A sense of purpose was demonstrated, together with an understanding of change, and what this requires, an intention to redistribute responsibility, and a leadership which recognised the importance of human relationships.

"There is an ethos of professional trust," a Department Coordinator commented.

That the school's developments were challenging leadership roles, was acknowledged by participants. For some, it was the challenge of responding to staff resistance or uncertainty. For others, it was the challenges of workload and trying to meet expectations, or taking on board training, and disseminating this to colleagues. The change in the school's dynamic which had given rise to these challenges though, was not seen as problematic, but rather, as empowering for leaders and their colleagues, and providing opportunities to explore and grow together.

Change in leadership focus was evident in the data. Participants felt that their leadership was becoming more learning centred, as they focused on the changes arising from the school's developments. The momentum of the process was commented on, one in which

leading learning was a central focus. Perspectives were positive, with leaders seeing themselves involved in their own learning, at one and the same time as being a leader of learning in a department.

An additional level of data was obtained in Summer, 2016, and is indicative of leadership practice at Buffett High School, having become more learning centred, in terms of influencing classroom practice and staff learning. This is demonstrated by the following response of an Assistant Principal,

"Yes, I do think my leadership practice has become more learning-centered. With all of the work being done with curriculum, REP lesson planning, assessment, and growth for all learners, I know my focus on 5x5's and observations (when I comment or pose questions) is geared towards learning and if their practice is gathering the necessary evidence of student understanding."

The data also provide a range of perspectives which indicate that participants see themselves as continuing on a leadership journey, one, on which they are developing further, as leaders of learning in the school. This is demonstrated by the following comments of two Department Coordinators.

"Definitely! I am on a path of leadership growth. I am constantly learning from other coordinators and our administrative staff. I have a lot to learn, but I feel like I made great strides this year", and,

"I am absolutely on a journey. I'd like to think that I had a leadership style in place before taking this position, but it is being developed and changing as I take on new responsibilities and take responsibility for my co- workers learning as well as my own."

The need to clarify what was happening re. the development priorities, and why (not least

at a time of significant change in the school's working practices) was recognised by the school, and that all staff needed to be involved from the early planning stages of these developments. Arguably leadership is inextricably bound up with these initiatives, and corroboration was gained from school leaders regarding the nature of this process.

The data, I suggest, demonstrate a range of features characteristic of a learning organisation, and more so, that these are embedded in Buffett High School's working practices. With regard to leadership, leaders are closely involved in the school's development priorities, and leading the learning in respect of these.

Theme 2. *Modelling Practices:*

Modelling can be defined as leading by example, and the actions a leader uses to demonstrate his or her practice. I suggest that leaders are watched closely by colleagues, and the latter can find support from, and are influenced by, those leaders who demonstrate in their professional behaviours, a knowledge of and willingness to be involved in the process of teaching and learning, and not least, in leading staff learning.

My findings show that this practice is being used widely by leaders at Buffett High School, particularly in respect of the introduction of the school's Action Plans. There is recognition of the need to ensure that their colleagues gain the professional skills necessary for the delivery and implementation of these plans, and through modelling, how this can be achieved. Professional development and training, together with Department meetings, seem to be the major vehicles through which modelling takes place. For example,

Department Coordinators comment positively on leading on this, modelling several different options, using professional development provision and meetings, "*to take our message forwards.*" Responses indicated a connectedness between modelling practices and professional dialogue.

Theme 3. *Monitoring Practices:*

Monitoring can be defined as a process of observing and checking the progress or quality of something. In schools it is about knowing what is going on, observing teaching, and jointly examining learning outcome data. Through this process, leaders are able to gain knowledge of teaching strengths and development needs amongst colleagues, and thus can provide professional support which has been informed by this diagnostic means.

The teaching and learning process at Buffett High School is regularly and rigorously monitored in a range of ways, and can be evidenced from the data.

For example, summary end of year documents of each of the school's three Action Plans identify the desired progress, and indicate the process of monitoring throughout the year. An extract from one plan, showing the school's monitoring practice, is shown below (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Evidence Based Lesson Planning

Determine Acceptable Evidence (Content and Process)

• Observations (Formal / Informal) • 5x5s • 5x5s Conversations • ELA Supervisor 5x5 • Department Coord. Conversations • District Walkthroughs	• Considerations from REP OBS Tool • Staff identifying needs • Dept. Coord. Identification of needs • Frequency of use (increasing) • Collect sample of quality
--	---

• CPPD Visits / Department Meeting Visits • (Dept. Differentiated)	assessments (spring?) • Dept Coordinator Review of REP Plans ? • Staff P.D. feedback • Aug 5 • Aug 17 DC • Oct 9 • Spring Feedback ?
---	--

From the above plan, observations, conversations, visits, and reviews can be identified as the working practices through which the action plans are monitored. (5x5s can be defined as short duration, classroom observations, followed up with feedback to the teacher).

In addition, the Principal's end of year summary report (Appendix 9) on the school's progress, provides very informative data, not least in relation to monitoring practices. An example, is his comments on the monitoring practices of the Core Coordinators and himself, in relation to the school's goals for the year (Ref. Appendix 9, Section 3B, para.1)

Also, the key contributions of the Assistant Principals to the monitoring process was identified in their visiting of classrooms, undertaking observations, reviewing lesson plans and providing support and feedback to teachers.

Interviews with Department Coordinators, provided further evidence of monitoring practices across the school. Comments demonstrated engagement with this process in a range of ways, formal and informal. Monitoring was clearly regarded as part of the leadership role, and undertaken with diligence.

My findings suggest that monitoring in the school was not undertaken in isolation, but rather as part of professional dialogue, and as a means of supporting and enhancing

professional skills. As with modelling, the monitoring process shows a connectedness with dialogue.

Theme 4. *The nature of Dialogue:*

Dialogue is essentially a conversation between two or more people where ideas or views are exchanged. In schools it is about creating and using opportunities to talk about learning and teaching, as craft knowledge is shared. The planning of meetings, reviewing practice, and jointly analysing data are all examples of dialogue. The mode of dialogue can include, for example, face to face conversations or electronic or e mail conversations. Its location can vary, from classrooms, to formal meetings, to meetings in corridors. The tone of dialogue can be challenging, developing, critical, coaching, mentoring or supportive. It is though, a disciplined activity which is focused and structured, and can be formal and informal.

My findings, from a range of data, including school documentation, interview transcripts and observations, are indicative of dialogue as a significant feature of the working practices at Buffett High School, occurring, very much as I have described above.

The Principal's end of year summary report provides evidence of dialogue, and being closely linked to monitoring. (Ref. Appendix 9, Sections 3B, para. 1, 3C, para.1, and 3D, para. 1)

Dialogue features centrally in the working practices of the Assistant Principals. Their comments in the interviews (March, 2016) were illustrative of this. As one stated, "*There is constant dialogue. Conversations are always taking place.*" These leaders describe a dynamic context in which people are focused on the learning process, and one where there has been growth to allow them to be more concerned with leading learning, and, as such, to

engage in dialogue with colleagues about teaching and learning in the school. Dialogue between the Principal and them, as well with colleagues, was highlighted also.

Among the Department Coordinators, dialogue features significantly , and varies in nature. Interview data provide an insight into this school practice. For one, *"dialogue is ongoing, and informal mainly."* and through this, *" we have moved forward, and are embracing change."* Similarly, for another , *" there is ongoing dialogue which is positive. We are accountable to one another, with well established lines of communication."* The nature of dialogue, and its importance to teaching and learning, can also be seen in a further comment, *"There is dialogue all the time with the team, coming from fresh perspectives. Team members are making proposals. It is exciting, new energy, new ideas of the team."*

Observations of a Coordinators' Meeting and a Training Day (Ref. Appendices 4 and 5) add further support to my view of dialogue as being central to the working practices of leaders and their colleagues at the school.

Dialogue can differ both in mode and tone, but essentially, I suggest, it provides a platform which allows professional learning to take place, not least in the case of the leader engaged in leading learning amongst his or her colleagues. My data indicate that this is the case at Buffett High School.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

My overarching research aim was to discover how learning centred leadership was developing at Buffett High School. In order to answer this, I asked a number of questions regarding the nature of the school's organisational structure and its practices. My research enabled me to gather a range of data of the school as a learning organisation, from which I

have gained an insight into its life and work, and, in particular, an appreciation, and an understanding of its leadership practices. As such, I believe, my main research aim and associated questions have been answered.

I used Southworth's (2008) model of learning centred leadership as my research tool, for reasons I have previously detailed (Ref. p.38, above). His framework, and the analysis that he offers, enabled me to find the following answers to my research questions.

My findings provided an answer to how the nature of the school's organisational culture and practices are assisting the development of learning centred leadership. Data (Ref. Ch.4, above) are consistent with the principles and practices of the learning organisation, identified by Southworth (2008), as crucial to learning centred leadership and its development. Buffett High School has a powerful dynamic of purposeful collaborative working, developing and supporting colleagues' professional practices, and through its leaders, leading learning across the school. As a community of learning, not least through its collective values and endeavour, and the ethos that exists, Buffett High School can be seen as assisting the development of learning centred leadership.

The importance of the three interconnecting processes of modelling, monitoring and dialogue was highlighted by Southworth (2008). He argues that that their combined effect makes for powerful learning for teachers (and students), and enables shared analyses of teaching and learning, and regards them as key tools for learning centred leaders.

Three of my research questions were concerned with these processes, and how they assisted and contributed to the development of learning centred leadership in the school.

My findings answered each of these questions The data (Ref. Ch. 4, above) provide a broad

picture of the school's practices in this context, and confirm that there is wide engagement by the school's leaders with these processes, which is assisting and contributing to the development of learning centred leadership at Buffett High School.

I have considered previously, in some detail (Ref. pgs. 17,23, above) Southworth's (2003) analysis of learning centred leadership, in which he discusses a range of implications for school leadership, and also draws some conclusions. For example, the importance of leaders being involved in staff learning and organisational learning, the nature of their skills and qualities, and leadership as a collective endeavour can be highlighted. In his conclusions, , he recognised the need to transform schools, where leaders adopt a learning centred approach, and are involved in capacity building with leaders developing other leaders.

Leadership practices, I suggest, underpin my research questions, and in examining the nature of these in the school, this has informed my answering of my various research questions.

Data (Ref. Ch. 4, above) of the leadership practices at Buffett High School confirm a broad range of practices that are consistent with, and supportive of, learning centred leadership, and, as such, have enabled me to answer my various research questions.

I found Southworth's model particularly appropriate for my purpose. It supported my research by providing a relevant theoretical framework through which I could fully consider the implications of my questions, regarding the principles and practice of learning centred leadership. The detail of this model certainly assisted my answering of my research questions.

The themes that emerged from my data analysis were compatible with my research questions, and more so, the themes that Southworth (2003) considered in his model, showed a close correspondence to them. Accordingly, I found this compatibility a useful benchmark for discussing my findings, and informing my conclusions. Southworth's themes, in being informed by empirical evidence, offer an 'authenticity' beyond the theoretical which I found helpful as a researcher.

I found that all areas of the model worked well for my purposes, but found, the modelling process more difficult than monitoring and dialogue to investigate and gather data (Ref.Ch.6, below). In the areas of the school that I researched, this model of learning centred leadership could be seen as operative in the working practices of the school's leaders. That is not to say though, that there is no variation in how it has developed, or is developing, among the various departments.

By way of concluding comments, I believe my research evidence has shown that the leadership at Buffett High School is about collective endeavour that has evolved from its dynamic of interpersonal relationships, rather than the action of an individual. Shared agency is seen to operate, based on trust, mutual support, and professional respect amongst colleagues. The development and growth of teachers as leaders of learning, who are engaged in purposeful collaborative working, developing and supporting their colleagues can be seen as the norm. Such practices, to improve further the quality of teaching and enhance student achievements, I suggest, are those of learning centre leaders.

My conclusion is that learning centred leadership is developing in Buffett High School. How this is developing, is explained, appropriately in the words of a Department Coordinator,

"I would say that I am continuing on a leadership journey. I would say that journey has taken me to places that I never thought I would go. I personally believe that the more I am on this journey the more I realize how interconnected all of the different parts are to learning. The tasks that we are given all are directly related back to learning and it's important as the Department Coordinator to model and display how important learning is to my colleagues."

Therein, I suggest, lies not only confirmation of its development, but the essence of learning centred leadership and its practice at Buffett High School.

Chapter 6: Evaluation

I acknowledge both strengths and weaknesses in my research study.

It was successful, I suggest, certainly in so far as I was able to answer my research questions.

It is my view that the strength of the study in this respect, resulted from my adoption of Southworth's (2008) model for my research. His analysis offered a detailed framework of learning centred leadership, which I found helpful to my understanding of the relevance of the data to this model of leadership, and in discussing my findings and conclusions.

One limitation of my research was in regard to conversations on modelling. On reflection, I believe that my questions on this aspect were not as well thought out as in other areas.

Participants understood the process and data was obtained. I still feel though, that I did not explore this aspect as fully as I could have.

My role in the school was an associate one, rather than as a member of staff. This, and the geographical distance, brought constraints to my role as an action researcher. Dialogue and involvement was maintained in a range of ways, but at the same time, I certainly feel continuity was an issue to some degree.

The size limit of this research study has proved to be a limitation. In collecting the data, a number of further interesting 'avenues' emerged which I would have wished to explore if

space had allowed. (I acknowledge though ,that the issue may lie with my management of the data, rather than university limits).

If I was to undertake an action research study in the future, I would wish to ensure a day to day, central involvement in the process, rather than what has been the case.

That said, I have found the research to be very interesting and enjoyable, and have gained both professionally and personally from the experience. I hope that my study is of benefit to the school in which my research was located. The quality of the professionalism there, was much to be admired.

References

- Abma , T.A. and Widdershoven, G.A.M. (2011) '*Evaluation as a relationally responsible practice*', in N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (eds), *The Sage handbook of Qualitative Research*, 4th edition, London: Sage, pages 669-680.
- Bolden, R (2004) *What is leadership ?* (Research Report 1) Exeter, United Kingdom: Leadership South West
- Bolman, L. G. & Deal, T.E. (1997) *Reframing organisations: Artistry, choice and leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey- Bass
- Bryman A. (2012) *Social Research Methods*, 4th edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Bush and Glover, (2003) *School Leadership: Concepts and Evidence*. NCSL: Nottingham
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., and Morrison K. (2000) *Research Methods in Education*, 5th edition, London and New York: Routledge
- Ciulla J. B.(ed.) (1998) *Ethics: The Heart of Leadership*. Westport CT: Quorum
- Coleman, J. S. (1988) *Social Capital in the creation of Human Capital*. The American Journal of Sociology 94, S95- S120
- Cresswell, J.W. (2013) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 3rd edition, London: Sage
- Crotty, M. (1998) *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*. London: Sage
- Daft, R. L. (2005) *The Leadership Experience*. 3rd edition, Cincinnati: South-Western

- Davies, B. and Davies, B. J. '*Strategic Leadership*', in B. Davies, Ed., *The Essentials of School Leadership*. London: PCP
- Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds) (2011) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 4th edition, London: Sage
- Dey , I. (1993) *Qualitative Data Analysis: A User-Friendly Guide for Social Scientists*, London: Routledge
- Edwards and Talbot (1999) *The Hard- pressed Researcher: A Research Handbook for the Caring Professions*. London: Longmans
- Elliot, J. (1991) *Action Research for Educational Change*. Buckingham: Open University Press
- Finlay, L. (2002) *Negotiating the swamp: the opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice*. London: Sage
- Fisher, B. A. (1974) *Small group decision making: Communication and the group process*. New York: Mc Graw-Hill
- Flick, U.(2009) *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, 4th edition, London: Sage
- Gheradi,S. (2001) *From Organisational Learning to Practice- based Knowing*. Human Relations, 54 (1) 131-139 London:Sage
- Gilmore,T., Krantz, J .and Ramirez,R.(1986) *Action Based Modes of Inquiry and the Host Researcher Relationship*. Consultation 5.3 :161.
- Grint,K. (2004) *What is Leadership? From Hydra to Hybrid*. *Working Paper*, University of Oxford
- Guba, E. G.(1990) *The Paradigm Dialog*. London: Sage

Hallinger, P. (2012) *Leadership for 21st Century Schools: from Instructional Leadership to Leadership for Learning*. Journal of Ed Admin, Vol 49 Iss. 2 pp 125-142

Hallinger, P. and Heck, R. (1999) *Next generation methods for the study of leadership and school improvement*, in J. Murphy and K.S. Louis (eds), *Handbook of Research on Educational Administration*, 2nd edn. San Francisco, CA: Jossey- Bass

Harris, A. (2005) '*Distributed leadership*', in B. Davies, Ed., *The Essentials of School Leadership*. London: PCP

Hsieh, H.F. and Shannon, S. E.(2005) *Three approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis*. Qualitative Health Research, 15(9): 1277-88

Kemmis, S. and Mc Taggart, R. (eds) (1998) *The Action Research Planner* Victoria: Deakin University Press

Knapp, M.S. et al, (2010) *Learning Centred Leadership and Leadership Support: Meaning and Practice in Urban Schools*. University of Washington: Wallace Foundation

Kvale, S. (1996) *InterViews: An introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. London: Sage

Lambert, L. (2005) '*Constructivist Leadership*', in B. Davies, Ed., *The Essentials of School Leadership*. London: PCP

Leithwood, K., Jantzi, D. and Steinbach, R. (1999) *Changing Leadership for Changing Times*. Buckingham: Open University Press

Lewin, K. (1946) *Action Research and Minority Problems*, Journal of Social Issues 2, 34-46.

Locke, T. et al (2013) *Ethical issues in Collaborative Action Research*. Educational Action Research, Vol. 21 no. 1 107-123

Male and Palailogue, 2012 *Learning Centred Leadership or Pedagogical Leadership*, Online article: discovery.ucl.ac.uk

Miles, M.B. and Huberman, A. M. (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*. London: Sage

Mockler, N.(2014) *When Research Ethics become Everyday Ethics* Educational Action Research, Vol. 22 no.22 146-158

Munby, S. (2014) *On Learning Centred Leadership* Speech: Montrose42.wordpress.com

Murphy, J. et al, (2006) *Learning- Centred Leadership: A conceptual Foundation*. Vanderbilt University: Wallace Foundatio

Northouse, P.G. (2010). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (5th ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA:Sage

O' Hanlon, C. (2003) *What makes Action Research a personal educational journey?* Working Paper: Hong Kong Institute of Education

Ormston, R. et al (2014) ' *The Foundations of Qualitative Research*' in , J Ritchie, J Lewis, C McNaughton Nicholls and R Ormston, *Qualitative Research Practice*. London: Sage

Ritchie, J. et al (2014) *Qualitative Research Practice*. London: Sage

Rose, S. et al (2015) *Management Research: Applying the Principles*. London: Routledge

Rost JC 1997) *Moving from individual to relationship: A post-industrial paradigm of leadership*. Journal of Leadership and Organisational Studies, 4, 3-16

Rubin, H. and Rubin, I. (2012) *Qualitative Interviewing: the Art of Hearing Data*. London
:Sage

Selepe, C. (2001) *Action Research as a tool for promoting Reflective Practice*. Working Paper:
Fremantle AU. International Research Conference.

Shaver, E. (2012) *The many definitions of Leadership*. Article: The Human Factor Advocate

Southworth, G. (2003, 2005, 2008) *Learning Centred Leadership*. Nottingham: NCSL

Spillane et al (2001) *Towards a Theory of Leadership Practice: a Distributed Perspective*.
Working Paper: Northwestern University, Institute for Policy Research

Stogdill, R M(1974) *Handbook of Leadership: A survey of Theory and Research*. New York:
Free Press

Spencer, L .et al (2014) *Analysis: Principles and Processes* in, J Ritchie et al, *Qualitative
Research Practice*. London: Sage

Swaffield, S. and MacBeath, J. (2009) '*Leadership for Learning*' in, J. MacBeath and
N.Dempster (eds.) *Connecting Leadership and Learning*. Abingdon: Routledge

Torbert W.R. and Taylor,S. S. (2008) *Action Inquiry, The Handbook of Action Research*
London: Sage

Yukl, G, (2010) *Leadership in organisations* (7th ed.) Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Framework of Action Cycles 1-3, Buffett High School, 2015-16

(Adapted from the school's original version)

Stage	Cycle 1 (June - Aug., 2015)	Cycle 2 (Mid Aug.- Oct., 2015)	Cycle 3 (Jan.- May, 2016)
Plan	Administrator's Retreat, June 2015. Principal & Assistant Principals built 3 plans which make up school's Development Priorities for 2015-16	Reflection stage of Cycle 1 fed into Cycle 2, and evolved as the next plan.	Reflection from Cycle 2 led to plan to carry through the school's development priorities (3 Action Plans) for the rest of the year.
Action	Plans unveiled to whole staff, August, 2015 Department Coordinators' Workshop, August, 2015	Training Day, September. Department Coordinators' Meeting, September- feedback to Principal, Director of Curriculum.	5 day Training Programme for Department Coordinators. Aim- (i) to deepen their knowledge & understanding of curriculum design process & to lead departments in same, and (ii) to fully prepare them for 2016-17 developments).
Observe	Outcomes of workshop observed by Principal and Curriculum Supervisor,	Department Workday observed by senior leaders.	Observations undertaken by Principal, Director of Curriculum and Curriculum Supervisor

	August, 2015		
Reflection	Department Coordinators asked to provide feedback re their understanding/ comfort in leading colleagues on the 3 Action Plans. (This fed into the next cycle to become the next plan).	Principal, Director of Curriculum, Curriculum Supervisor reflected on process. Led to proposals to Superintendent- accepted in November, and became plan to carry through for the rest of the school year.	Reflection on above, lead on to plans for 2016-17

Appendix 2: Calendar of Meetings, Buffett High School, 2015-16 (Adapted from the school's original version)

Date	Meeting	Purpose
5/8/15	Whole staff	Training session re. 3 Action Plans
15/8/15	Department Coordinators	Workshop
17/8/15	Department Coordinators	Monthly Meeting
8/15	Core Coordinators	Monthly Meeting
9/9/15	Department Coordinators	Professional Development: Evidence Based Lesson Level Planning
28/9/15	Department Coordinators	Monthly Meeting
9/15	Core Coordinators	Monthly Meeting
9/10/15	Departments	Workday
22/10/15	Department Coordinators	Monthly Meeting
10/15	Core Coordinators	Monthly Meeting
18/11/15	Department Coordinators	Monthly Meeting
11/15	Core Coordinators	Monthly Meeting
28/1/16	Department Coordinators	Monthly Meeting
1/16	Core Coordinators	Monthly Meeting
5/2/16	Faculty	Whole Staff Meeting
2/16	Core Coordinators	Monthly Meeting
2/3/16	Department Coordinators	Monthly Meeting
4/3/16	Core Coordinators	Monthly Meeting
7/3/16	Faculty	Whole Staff Meeting
31/3/16	Department Coordinators	Monthly Meeting
4/16	Core Coordinators	Monthly Meeting
28/4/16	Department Coordinators	Monthly Meeting
19/5/16	Department Coordinators	Monthly Meeting
5/16	Core Coordinators	Monthly Meeting
2/6/16	Faculty	Whole Staff Meeting

Appendix 3; A sample from notes on initial dialogue with the Principal of Buffett High School, July, 2015

Principal's primary responsibilities- Instructional Programme and Building operation.

Works closely with key leaders- Assistant Principals and Department Coordinators.

What they do:

School's across department goals & objectives- to support existing programmes, explore new programmes and opportunities, enhance current offerings, establish a vision for the department, review emerging themes, ideas and issues, staffing and scheduling, curriculum and assessment, and instruction (planning and pedagogy)

Assistant Principals (roles)- day to day administration of the building and student management, supervision of the Departments (observation, support), visit classrooms, provide feedback, review lesson plans.

Department Coordinators (roles)- lead teaching/learning process, review research, contribute to Prof.Dev., provide input to Principal re Dept. work, provide insight to Principal & A. Principals re. staff performance, support/develop staff

How they operate:

Organisational Structure- Principal, 2 Assistant Principals & 16 Department Coordinators

Meetings: Principal with A. Principals- daily & weekly; Principal with Dept. Coordinators- monthly; Principal with Core Coordinators (4)- monthly, and with each, weekly.

Meetings with each of non-core Coordinators, as needed.

Faculty meeting- monthly

Meetings- Principal with District representatives- re. budget and instruction programme

Department practice: Dept. meeting- monthly, CPPD (collaborative planning professional development)-weekly, Prof. Dev.- time allocated as necessary, involvement in Faculty meetings- monthly

School Development Priorities, 2015-16:

3 Action Plans- to be introduced: (1) Evidence based lesson level planning, (2) Digital Leadership, (3) English Language and Arts (implementation of new English curriculum/cornerstone assessment as an exemplar model for other depts).

Key points identified from meeting/dialogue:

Roles/responsibilities of key leaders

cross-school goals/objectives

organisational structure

working practices

School Development Priorities, 2015-16

Appendix 4: A sample of field notes from the observation of Training Day (2) 9 March, 2016

Day- jointly led by District officer (Director of Curriculum) and Curriculum Supervisor/ Dept Coordinator.

Attended by- Principal, Dept Coordinators and one member of their dept. (& myself).

Presentation- re. Curriculum & Assessment, followed by group activity across depts.

Activity- dialogue, centred on process of teaching& learning.

- discussion re. pedagogy-methods/approaches, benefits to learners.
- sharing of ideas, offering support/strategies re. teaching/learning process
- collaborative working- sharing of professional practice.

Group work- each group had a presenter and summariser, irrespective of post held.

Key questions- why are we doing what we are doing?, performance, audience- who are we assessing for?, standards- aim to work collaboratively, and to try to not be too burdensome on students, at same time, not to lessen impact, how do you grade creativity?, what is authenticity?

Paired working- to identify potential cornerstone areas, to identify where other depts. could collaborate/support, discussion re the nature of assessments.

Summary- process should allow empowerment, open dialogue, reflection and self evaluation.

Key points:

- central focus on teaching/learning
- significant professional dialogue, sharing of ideas/expertise
- collaborative working, modelling of approaches/methods
- responsibilities distributed

- increasing of understanding through detailed consideration of issues
- ways of leading process considered via identifying where other departments, could collaborate/support.

Appendix 5: A sample of a memo, re. examination of school documentation, April, 2016

Memo: Department Coordinators' Meeting Agenda 2 March, 2016
Meeting focused on instructional programme re. updates on school's Action Plans, information re. Training Day 2 (Curriculum& Assessment), Leadership (Coordinator's role) & Dept. Meeting visits. Pre meeting preparation for working in groups- read/study the 3/4 practices from the 10 practices of the coaching leader. Findings to be shared/discussed in meeting.
Key Points: need to-liaise with Principal re Action Plans - follow up, which aspects of Coordinator's role? - follow up, group work dialogue Key Terms: school developments, teaching& learning, leadership practice/professional development, joint working/sharing, monitoring/observation, school culture/structure

Appendix 6: A sample of a Data Information Sheet(interview with a Department Coordinator, March, 2016)

Data Information Sheet	Number 9
Participant: Department Coordinator Key Points: re role/responsibilities - introduced/involved in school's developments - modelled/continued dialogue - opportunity to grow - leaders of learning are emerging in department and beyond -response to challenge/changes has led people to develop roles -culture of collaboration/ networking - leadership role changing/ leadership practice becoming more learning centred/ has to.	
Location of Interview: school office	Date of interview: 10/3/16

Appendix 7: List of initial codes used in research analysis

collaboration/collaborative culture 1

collegiality 2

collective endeavour 3

joint working 4

distributed leadership/responsibilities 5

influencing/developing others 6

modelling 7

monitoring 8

dialogue 9

leading learning 10

facilitating 11

understanding/responding to change 12

developing/deepening knowledge 13

school context/structure 14

sharing ideas 15

supporting others 16

capacity building 17

Appendix 8; A sample of a coded transcript from an interview, March 2016 with a Department Coordinator (with cross- department support responsibilities)

Department Coordinator responses:

"I did the professional days and modelled 7 through the ELA Action Plan. I took this model 7 and explained about it and allowed staff to dive in and develop." 6

" There is constant dialogue 9 in department meetings. We are looking at specifically designed instruction for students." 8

"We are leading on learning, 10 taking what we want, 17 taking on the drive of the District." 12

Others are leaders 5 in the various buildings. People go to people, 16 there is a willingness to." 14

"There is a collaborative culture, 1 a network. 2 Staff continue to support each other and reach out to specific departments.16 Staff get into classrooms and make sure the message is going forth. 7 I see teachers from other departments co working 4 and how this work can be modelled." 7

"These are early stages of development. 13 There is constant development, 13 honing our skills. 17

"We are aiming to provide a world class curriculum for our students." 14

"As leaders, our challenge is to make sure we as Coordinators are on the same path, 3 as we continue to grow this. 13 We need to continue to explore together, 1,15 rather than in isolation. This is the best model." 4

"We as a department and a School District, these developments have brought us

together, 2 centralising what is a huge focus on shared learning." 13,15

"My leadership is a journey and I don't ever want to stay stagnant. I'm leading to leave a legacy." 6

Appendix 9: Principal's end of year summary report

3 A Leads School Improvement Initiatives

Throughout the first half of this year I have spent a significant amount of time in working towards school improvement as measured by both Student Achievement measures as well as through our efforts with respect to our improvement via our Alternate Pathways to Graduation initiative.

This work continued throughout the spring semester. Regular meetings were held with the Math, Science and ELA coordinators to discuss planned interventions and to plan for the Spring Keystones. We discussed more than just Keystone remediation with conversations often looking forward towards program offerings and impacts. Additionally we attended a session at the CAIU providing feedback on Senate Bill 880 with respect to the PBA.

Student Achievement

Math - Continued to work with the Math Coordinator with detailed attention paid to students in grades 9-11 with respect to our supplemental and remediation efforts with an eye towards all students reaching proficiency via the Keystone Test Administration. We retested about 80 students in December and have another 50 or so planned for the Spring. (These are largely students in grades 9 and 10)

This work continued throughout the spring and all students designated, took the Keystone re-take along with those students presently enrolled in Algebra I. Additionally, we piloted giving the Alg I level II students their final exam prior to the Keystone, so that the teachers had some aligned data to analyze and use as the basis for the Keystone Review sessions in the week leading up to the Keystone Exam.

Biology – we have implemented a flipping of our junior and senior level three science courses. This allowed us to remediate 90% of the current juniors who were not proficient last spring, so they could re-take the Keystone in December. About 40 juniors re-took the Keystone in December. We will be using the remainder of the “time available” in the biology position this spring to work to remediate those students presently enrolled in Chem Level II.

We were able to provide approximately 40 students with intervention that involved some teacher designed, computer aided remediation. About half of these students had availability in their schedule to get face time with the teacher who has a portion of their assignment designated for Bio remediation. It will be interesting to see these results later this summer.

English Lit – we are presently implementing our new C & A in English. Additionally I visited with all junior English classes in January. We administered the Keystone to all juniors in January and await our results. At that point we will determine our intervention plan for juniors in the spring prior to the May Re- Test.

As we have previously discussed, our Winter Keystone results were very strong. With approximately 90% of the current junior class reaching proficiency, we feel we are in a good place. Of the 35 students who were not proficient, nearly all students were Basic in both modules, with just a handful receiving Below Basic in a single module. The challenge lies in what we decide to do with these students. We know who they are, in other words what prototype they fit – namely level III and learning support, but what can we do next to keep them moving closer to proficiency.

Alternate Pathways

We continue to forge a new path towards re-defining our senior year, which over time will enhance the culture and learning experience for all students as they strive to qualify for these experiences. We are in the middle of a more aggressive campaign to expand existing and to promote new learning experiences for senior year. We project that at least 100 seniors will be participating in 1 or more of these offerings at the start of next school year.

As we have discussed at cabinet throughout the year, we are most excited to introduce some online electives next year. The key will be marketing, supporting and then determining if our route is successful or if we need to review our approach to online electives. We see a strong increase in Internship, Co-op, and Independent Study for next year. Additionally we continue to manoeuvre our Dual Enrolment program and offerings. We are excited that the new Messiah program will have what our students need. I do believe we are at the 4-5 student threshold necessary for participation next fall (and this could increase.)

3 B Aligns Curricula, Instruction and Assessments

I spend a tremendous amount of time with the core coordinators, at times as a group, at times with their department and often in 1-1 conversations. The purpose of these conversations is monitor our work towards our building goals for this year, particularly with respect to the C&A system and the Evidence Based Lesson Level Planning (REP Plans.) These conversations also include dialogue on present assessment challenges combined with future assessment needs (mindset.) throughout these conversations, deliberate attention is paid to state generated assessment data (where applicable) as well as localized data and issues. This really is our next big conversation. English needs it now, the others are 12-18 months away. Additionally, this is where some of the initial discussions on Differentiation have begun to take place....there is a need and desire for that right now in English.

I really like where we are at here. (Realizing that Math is not quite where we were hoping to see them reach.) However, I think everyone else is either where we hoped they would be or further by this point. Much of this is a result of the plan to bring all other departments on board via the coordinator training and the PD plan for next year. With great movement in this area, the REP plan movement was steady but not continuously growing if I were to graph it. However, I think this changed as a result of the C & A momentum that was gained this year. Finally, I am most excited about the conversations slated for next year on the topic of assessment (namely in English, but also in Alg I and Biology, as a result of Keystone impacts.)

3 C Implements High Quality Instruction

This continues to be a strength of the staff. My efforts to support this comes through a variety of messages delivered to staff via PD sessions, faculty meetings, and the messages included in the weekly bulletin. Additionally I continue to work with my two APs and the English Supv. To ensure that the message and tone of message match the culture I desire for our building, a culture that encourages and rewards pedagogical risk taking. Our 5x5 and observation efforts continue to be foundation of these efforts. Clearly English, with a supervisor is reaching a new level, not solely in performance but in collegial discourse and shared planning which leads to the highest level of professional growth.

I continue to be pleased with our efforts and results in this area. Clearly adding TB and AB to the mix this year only strengthened this as an aspect of the high school program. Additionally the digital integration push was well received and really does add a lot of value to a staff that already has a strong instructional repertoire. Clearly this will continue to change as our lessons gain more purpose and focus as a part of the C & A process.

3 D High Expectations for All Students

This is accomplished via a number of approaches – namely support of the teaching staff. This support can appear in the format of formal PD or informal teachable moments or “entry points” to include 5x5s, conversations, observations, faculty meetings, emails and weekly bulletins.

At the same time, we have some strides to make in this realm. I do believe a deeper understanding of differentiation, namely differentiating assessments will be the key to us taking the next step. Even though we desire and need improvement, I do believe our growth data as well as other data comparing us to schools in the region yields that we are hitting and exceeding this target.

The Growth for All Learners approach for next year, namely changing mindsets the development of understandings, is essential to addressing the need identified above. I look forward to our work on this (at the retreat, and back at the building

afterwards) as we plan for 2016-2017. I think the Why, How, What approach – noting that it is not necessarily sequential – is the right approach.

3 E Maximizes Instructional Time

I think we do very well in this through a variety of means, and while I cannot take credit for the design of collaborative planning, I believe I have and continue to effectively ensure it is preserved and used effectively. The Coordinators have been vital in helping me to ensure that this is a part of our fabric, our culture and how we do business regularly. Additionally the construction of the master schedule, to include teaching assignments and class sizes is a key component to ensuring that we get the most out of the instructional time we have available.

While I have no individual accomplishment to point to, this is a core value and was at the center of how we administered AP Exams, Keystone Exams, Senior Exams and Underclass Exams in a span of 5 weeks. That being said, I think it is time to begin to study how we organize our time for instruction and that which best suits the intended outcomes of our C & A approach.