

CHANGE AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: AN  
EXPLORATION OF SCHOOL LEADERS' PERCEPTIONS  
AND EXPERIENCES OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP IN  
THREE SPECIAL SCHOOL SETTINGS.

By

CAROLYN DAVIS

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## ABSTRACT

Whilst the literature around Distributed Leadership (DL) is immense, with some 720,000 articles being written between 2002 and 2013 (Tian, Risku and Collin, 2016), little research was found to have been carried out on DL in special education. Using data gathered through semi-structured interviews and observations, this multiple case study explores school leaders' perceptions and experience of distributed leadership, against a background of change and school improvement, in three special schools.

The findings show DL to be a multi-faceted concept, which is manifested differently in each school. The research highlighted that the nature of distribution is determined by the interplay of four key themes. First, school context, which includes the career path of the Headteacher and other leaders, alongside ongoing change within the school, notably rising pupil numbers. Second, the role of the Headteacher as strategic and moral leader who empowers, supports and develops leadership in others whilst reserving the right to say 'no', is crucial. Third are school cultures, which are characterised by positive relationships, teamwork, collaboration, including multidisciplinary partnership and teacher leadership, and are shaped by the Headteacher and staff within the school context. However, a fourth factor, which runs across the above themes, is critical in determining the nature of DL, namely the growing number of pupils with Complex Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (CLDD). Pupil needs drive school improvement, underpin moral purpose, and leads to the internal recruitment and training of leaders, which ensures that leadership is founded on an understanding of this fourth factor. In meeting the needs of these pupils, for whom tried and tested strategies no longer work (Champion, 2005), collaborative practice and teacher leadership are fundamental. Thus,

it is argued that DL has a significant role in underpinning this process in special education.

The research also highlights participants' perceptions that DL has a positive impact on school improvement, through the building of leadership capacity, motivating teachers, reducing staff turnover, and improving teaching and learning by the creation and sharing of new knowledge. Most participants feel that this impacts positively on pupil outcomes, although they recognise that whole school data does not evidence these perceptions.

## DEDICATION

To

Dyl and Shorl

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CLDD	Complex Learning Difficulties and Disabilities
DL	Distributed Leadership
EHCP	Education Health Care Plan
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
HT	Headteacher
IEP	Individual Education Plan
ML1	Middle Leader 1
ML2	Middle Leader 2
MSI	Multi-sensory impairment
PECS	Picture Exchange Communication System
PLC	Professional Learning Community
NCSL	National College for School Leadership
OT	Occupational Therapist
SaLT	Speech and Language Therapist
SCERTS	Social Communication Emotional Regulation and Transactional Supports
SEND	Special Education Needs and Disabilities
SL1	Senior Leader 1

SL2	Senior Leader 2
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SLTh	Senior Leader Therapies
SMART	Specific Measurable Attainable Relevant Time-based
SSAT	The Specialist Schools and Academies Trust
SMT	Senior Management Team
TA	Teaching Assistant
TEACCH	Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children
TL	Teacher Leadership
TL1	Teacher Leader 1
TL2	Teacher Leader 2
TL3	Teacher Leader 3

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

The research undertaken focusses on the perceptions and experiences of school leaders in the management of change, related to distributed leadership (DL), and the consideration of outcomes for school improvement, within special school settings. The research uses a case study methodology which focuses on three special schools. Spillane (2006) and MacBeath (2009) noted the importance of context in determining the nature of the management of change. In line with this, the thesis reviews the context of each special school, which includes the complex needs of its students, and how these impact on the way in which DL is enacted and its outcomes.

This introductory chapter outlines the rationale for the research, its significance, research aims and objectives, research context, research design and concludes with an overview of the structure of the thesis.

#### 1.2 Rationale

The research initially stemmed from my experience as a new special school Headteacher, responsible for implementing a school improvement plan, that would aim to ensure that the increasingly complex needs of the pupils could be met. In preparation for Headship, I completed the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) through the National College for School Leadership (NCSL). NCSL promoted DL as a leadership strategy (MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse, 2004; Hartley, 2007; Currie, Lockett and Suhomlinova, 2009).

However, the notions of accountability and empowerment through DL, which were embedded both within the National Standards for Headteachers (DfE, 2015a), and the Ofsted inspection framework (Ofsted, 2015), seemed out of step with the notion of authentic empowerment through DL (Fitzgerald and Gunter, 2006; Hartley, 2007; Hargreaves and Fink, 2008). Within this context, NPQH did not seem to provide sufficient preparation for managing complex situations and the rigours of real-life Headship. At the time of my training, NPQH also offered few opportunities for learning within the context of special education.

Ongoing change in special education also impacted on school leadership and set the context for school improvement. Some of these changes, such as those introduced through the Children and Families Act (2014) derived from government policy. However, by far the most significant change lay in the increasing complexity and number of pupils with complex needs, in special schools (Baker, 2009; DCSF, 2010). The Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) recognised that a new generation of students with Complex Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (CLDD) was emerging, who were 'wired differently', (Carpenter and Egerton, 2013, cited in Carpenter, 2016a). These students did not respond to tried and tested approaches (Champion, 2005, cited in Carpenter *et al.*, 2011), but required individual approaches, to secure engagement (Carpenter *et al.*, 2011). In meeting these needs Carpenter *et al.* (2012, p.39) recommended that: 'Schools need to develop as professional learning communities and as centres of professional inquiry'.

From my own experience, another consequence of the increasing complexity and number of students with CLDD, was the difficulty in recruiting and retaining highly skilled specialist teachers. The SALT review (DCSF, 2010) found that this was compounded by experienced

teachers either retiring from, or leaving, the profession. Recruitment to initial teacher training programmes was not able to meet this need (Male and Rayner, 2007). Thus, many schools, with the encouragement of the National College developed the practice of growing their own teachers (Rayner, 2007) through programmes such as Schools Direct, with much of the training, coaching and mentoring provided by peers and school leaders. This scenario was congruent with my experience within special schools.

Being able to meet changing students' needs has required a whole school response. Harris (2009a, p.253) argued that DL provided the 'organisational circuitry' for strategies such as collaborative practice, capacity building, knowledge creation and the development of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Research (Muijs and Harris, 2003; Hallinger and Heck, 2009; Harris, 2009b) linked DL to successful schools. However, whilst the literature around DL is broad, there is limited research focused specifically on special education.

My personal experience as a new Headteacher has led me to continue my learning journey to gain a deeper insight into the experience of DL, in the context of change and school improvement, from the perspectives of special school leaders.

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

Whilst a wealth of research on DL in mainstream education has been undertaken, studies which focus on DL in special education, and how this relates to change and school improvement, are limited. This paucity of research is supported by the report, *Leadership of Special Schools: Issues and Challenges* (DfE, 2013) which referenced only two studies which related to practices associated with DL. Firstly, Ainscow, Fox and Coupe O'Kane (2003), highlighted the importance of leaders building collaborative teams; and secondly, Rayner

(2007) considered DL to be congruent with the formation of PLCs. Internationally, a small number of special school studies relate to phenomena, such as PLCs, and collaborative approaches which were seen as essential in meeting the needs of complex learners (Billingsley, 2004 and 2007; Boscardin, 2007; Schecher and Feldman, 2013). Additionally, a small number of studies were found which included special school leaders as part of a wider group of participants (Smeets and Ponte, 2009; Bush and Glover, 2012; Szeto and Cheng, 2018). However, except for Bush and Glover's (2012) research, all the above studies took place outside England and may be influenced by cultural differences (Hairon and Goh, 2015), which could impact on making direct comparisons with English special schools.

The research was therefore intended to contribute to the understanding of how special school leaders, in an English context, can meet the challenges which surround school improvement and accountability, in the context of ongoing change, through DL. By focusing on the perceptions and experiences of leaders, it would also contribute to the wider literature where there is a lack of research about DL in practice (Harris and DeFlaminis, 2016). The perspectives of headteachers, senior leaders, middle leaders, and teacher leaders from three schools provided an insight into DL in a range of special school contexts.

New and experienced Headteachers may be interested in the themes that emerge from this research, such as the development of PLCs and collaborative approaches to meet complex needs, and the perceived impact of DL on teaching and learning. Additionally, policy makers may be interested in areas around teacher training and leadership training in relation to special schools. Whilst researchers, in the field of special education, may find the research useful for their own work, or worthy of further investigation.



## 1.4 Research Aims and Objectives

Thomas (2013, p.3) noted that in formulating a research question the researcher should consider the relationship between the 'background' in which an issue arises, 'the issue', and the 'solution', in terms of the new light that will be thrown on the issue. The purpose of the research was to explore the concept of DL in relation to change and school improvement, with a particular focus on special education, and to investigate these issues in the context of three special school settings. The research was based on the perceptions and experiences of special school leaders, including headteachers, senior, middle and teacher leaders.

The aims of the research were:

1. To explore the concept and role of DL within the leadership and management of change and school improvement in the current literature and research, focusing particularly on practice in special schools.
2. To investigate school leaders' experiences and perceptions of DL in the process and outcomes of change and improvement in three special school settings.
3. To review and analyse the way in which school leaders, across a school, were involved in change management, and their views on its impact on school improvement.
4. To analyse areas of commonality and difference, regarding the operation and outcomes of DL in relation to school context and leadership roles in each setting.
5. To extend the research base around the operation of DL in relation to change and school development in special schools and make recommendations for practice and research in the broader special school sector.

From these aims three broad research questions were constructed:

1. What is meant by DL, school improvement and change in the context of school leadership, with a particular focus on special schools?
2. What insights do school leaders' accounts give us into how they experience managing change through DL?
3. What are school leaders' perceptions of the outcomes of DL in securing school improvement?

### 1.5 Research Context

The research, for the most part, is set within the wider DL literature, because of the paucity of research around leadership in special education. One of the issues which surrounds the concept of DL is its resemblance to other forms of shared leadership (Oduro, 2004) which has led to difficulties in reaching an agreed definition (Bolden *et al.*, 2003), although Spillane (2006) argued that his distributed perspective was different from other forms of shared leadership because it was also an analytical tool, and because of the prominence of the situation as the unit of analysis. Spillane's (2006, p.14) concept of DL, based on activity theory and distributed cognition in which: 'Leadership practice takes place in the interaction of leaders, followers and their situation', was used in analysing the data. In addition, MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse's, (2004) taxonomy of distribution, supported by those of Ritchie and Woods (2007) and Harris (2009a) were used in providing a conceptual framework.

My experience of working in special school settings for 20 years, where child centred collaborative cultures have typically been the focal point of core values, aligned with MacBeath's (2009) recognition of the role of school culture in defining the nature of DL.

Therefore, Telford's (1996) model of collaborative leadership was also included within the conceptual framework.

Teacher leadership (TL), which has been described as DL in action (Muijs and Harris, 2003), is of relevance to the special education context. In response to the growing number and complexity of students with special needs, Carpenter *et al.* (2011) have championed the use of inquiry-based approaches, where teachers become leaders of practice. It will be argued that DL provides the framework which underpins these approaches and supports the meeting of individual pupil needs. In exploring TL, Fairman and Mackenzie's (2012) work has been used as a conceptual framework: it provided a point of reference for understanding DL in special education and supported the development of a taxonomy of distribution for special schools.

The role of the Headteacher was at the heart of my motivation for this research and was recognised within the literature as being pivotal in implementing, supporting and sustaining DL and TL (Leithwood *et al.*, 2006; Muijs and Harris, 2006; Hallinger and Heck, 2009; Smeets and Ponte, 2009; Klein *et al.*, 2018). This included the development of cultures and structures (Leithwood, 2006; Murphy *et al.*, 2009; Harris, 2009a), and the development of leadership in others (Harris and Lambert, 2003). DL provides significant challenges for headteachers (Copland, 2003; Harris 2009b; MacBeath, 2009; Murphy *et al.*, 2009; Torrance, 2013;), not least in relation to Headteachers' accountability for school outcomes (Wallace, 2001; Klar *et al.*, 2016). This has resulted in conflicting views about the authenticity of empowerment, and the locus of power (Jackson, in Harris and Lambert, 2003; Hatcher, 2005; Hartley, 2007; Lumby, 2013), including Wood's (2016) concept of social authority. These complexities and

conflicting views formed a backdrop in striving to gain a deeper understanding of the role of the Headteacher within DL, in the special school context.

In considering the outcomes of DL, there was a scarcity of empirical data about the relationship between DL and school improvement, (Boscardin, 2007; Harris *et al.*, 2007; Hallinger and Heck, 2009; Robinson, 2009). However, a section of the literature, typified by Harris (2014), identified a mediated correlation between DL and school improvement, whereby processes involved in DL, facilitated strategies widely associated with school improvement such as, positive cultures, high teacher motivation, social capital, collaborative practice, capacity building, knowledge creation and the development of PLCs. Harris and Lambert's (2003) model of Leadership Capacity also provided a point of reference. In terms of improved pupil outcomes, no direct links with DL were claimed because of the many factors which influenced student learning (Hallinger and Heck, 1996; 2009). I have aimed through this research to contribute towards an improved understanding of the relationship between DL and school improvement, in a special school context.

## **1.6 Research Design**

Robson and McCartan (2016) observed that research design is determined by the type of research questions a study is addressing. This research sought to explore the perspectives and experiences of leaders in three special schools, and adopted a phenomenological approach, which aimed to describe, understand and interpret the perceptions and subjective experiences of participants (Denscombe, 2014). Marshall and Rossman (2016) contend that researchers' views should be put to one side in this methodology, therefore, the rationale for

undertaking this study, and my background in special schools, was declared (Chapter 3), whilst the views and perceptions of the interviewees were presented and analysed.

The context of the special school sector was central to this research. Moreover, within that broad designation, the contexts of individual special schools and leaders, were equally important. Thus, a multiple snapshot case study strategy was adopted which recognised that 'context is an important determinant of cause and effect', (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, p.376), and echoes interpretivist methodologies (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995, p.95, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, p.376). This strategy enabled analytical generalisation (Miles and Huberman, 1994), and comparison of data related to contexts (Spillane, 2006).

Three special schools were identified which met the initial selection criteria of needing to be within a one-hour journey from my school. Headteachers were approached by email, and an initial face-to-face presentation was arranged to outline the intended research, and to gain consent to participate. The subsequent research was undertaken in three phases. First, purposive sampling (Denscombe, 2014) was used, through the adoption of a recruitment questionnaire, in which respondents were asked to nominate an individual they would go to for advice (Spillane *et al.*, 2008). Data from this was used, in a quota sampling approach (Drever, 1995, cited in Brundrett and Rhodes, 2014), to identify a group made up of the Headteacher and, as far as possible, two senior leaders, two middle leaders and two teacher leaders in each school. The second phase of the research involved the leaders' participation in semi-structured interviews. Interview questions were formulated around the research questions, using themes which emerged from the literature. The third phase of the research

involved the observation of meetings in which interviewees participated. This enhanced the rigour of interview data through data triangulation (Denzin, 1988), and aimed to reduce researcher bias or reactivity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, cited in Robson, 2002).

In analysing the data Miles and Huberman's (1994) strategy of data reduction, display and conclusion drawing was used. A series of themes were identified through the constant comparative method (Thomas, 2013) which were presented using matrices (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This facilitated a broader comparison between schools, and leadership groups both within each school and across schools. The research findings were then discussed and interpreted in the light of the literature. This process supported the understanding of the role of DL in change and school improvement in the special school setting and facilitated the drawing of conclusions through which recommendations for practice, policy and future research were put forward.

### **1.7 Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis consists of five chapters: Chapter 1 Introduction; Chapter 2 Literature Review; Chapter 3 Design; Chapter 4 Findings and Analysis; and Chapter 5 Conclusions. The introduction provides an overview of the thesis. It describes the reasons for conducting the research, its significance, conceptual framework, aims and objectives and how the research was undertaken. The literature review has two areas of focus. Section 2.2 outlines the key themes around DL in the literature, including those relating to special education, while Section 2.3 reviews the literature concerning DL in relation to school improvement and change in special education. Chapter 3 outlines the research framework and associated processes for sampling, data collection, data analysis and matters of reliability, validity and trustworthiness.

In Chapter 4 the findings from the research are presented, and the analysis of data undertaken to identify key themes. The themes are reviewed against the literature. In Chapter 5 the main threads of the research are pulled together to form conclusions, contributions to knowledge are identified, the dissemination of findings and the potential impact on policy and practice are reviewed, the limitations of the study are considered, and recommendations for future research are summarised.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature around DL in the context of change and school improvement, with a particular focus on special schools. In doing so, it aims to address research question 1: ‘What is meant by distributed leadership, school improvement and change in the context of school leadership, with a particular focus on special schools?’

The review is divided into two parts. The first part (Section 2.2) explores the principal themes around DL. It begins by considering the nature of DL and its relationship with other kinds of leadership, notably collaborative leadership, and the importance of school culture in relation to this. It goes on to consider themes related to DL including power and empowerment, the role of senior teams, trust and accountability and different models of DL and TL, before looking at the role of the Headteacher in terms of the challenges posed by DL and the Headteacher’s role in developing leadership in others through the development of structures, routines and supportive cultures. It concludes with a review of criticisms of DL. The second part (Section 2.3) focuses on the relationship between DL, Change and School Improvement. It starts by looking at change in special schools, notably the growing number of students with increasingly complex needs and the challenges that this has posed. It goes on to look at the relationship between school improvement and DL and explores processes at work within DL which are associated with successful schools. These include collaborative practice, PLCs, capacity building and knowledge creation. The outcomes of TL, particularly around staff retention and motivation, and different patterns of distribution are considered separately. Finally, the



relationship between DL and pupil outcomes is reviewed.

## 2.2 Distributed Leadership

### 2.2.1 Definitions of Distributed Leadership

DL has grown from being what Gronn (2006, p.1 cited in Bolden, 2011, p.254) described as 'the new kid on the block' to become the 'new orthodoxy' (Fitzgerald and Gunter, 2008, p.332), being the subject of 720,000 articles between 2002 and 2013 (Tian, Risku and Collin, 2016) and has become a popular 'post heroic' representation of leadership (Badaracco, 2001, cited in Bolden, 2011). Yet despite this there was 'little agreement as to the meaning of the term' (Bennett *et al.*, 2003, p.2). Indeed, Spillane (2006 p.102) went so far as to say that its appeal 'lies in the ease with which it can become all things to all people'. In this section I will explore these 'disparate' (Bennett *et al.*, 2003 p.15) definitions to get closer to the nature of DL.

Harris (2004) conceptualised DL as a form of collective leadership in contrast to hierarchical systems managed by an individual, referencing Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee's (2002, cited in Harris, 2004, p.14) view where 'every person at entry level in one way or other acts as a leader'. However, she noted that this did not mean that every individual must lead. Nevertheless, Harris (2004, p.14) argued that 'engaging many people in leadership activity is at the core of leadership in action.' Harris (2004, p.14) provided a glimpse of what DL in practice might look like and posited: 'DL therefore means multiple sources of guidance and direction, following the contours of expertise in an organisation, made coherent through a common culture'. Within this form of leadership, she (Harris, 2003b, p.14) recognised that both formal and informal leaders worked side by side.

The rise of DL stemmed from the work of Gronn (2002a) who identified two types: additive distribution, and concertive action. Gronn (2002b, p.3) described additive distribution as ‘the aggregated leadership behaviour of some, many or all members of an organisation’ in which leadership was the outcome of the interacting initiatives of a range of people. The second, and most notable form of DL for Gronn (2002b, p.28), was ‘concertive action’ in which collective leadership is more than the sum of the parts, and results from ‘structurally constrained conjoint activity, or the concertive labour performed by pluralities of interdependent organisational members.’ He described leadership as influence attributed voluntarily by members of an organisation, in both formal and informal positions, whose relationship was one of synergy. Gronn, (2000, p.322) saw distribution as an emergent and organising process which gradually crystallised to become an ‘entity’.

Spillane (2006) similarly identified two aspects of DL: the leader-plus aspect and practice aspect. The leader-plus aspect had much in common with Gronn’s (2002a) additive leadership. Leadership extended beyond the Headteacher and included multiple leaders, both formal and informal, with the way it was distributed being affected by leadership routine, subject area, type and size of school, and the school’s or school leadership team’s developmental stage. This aspect of Spillane’s (2006) work was central to this thesis.

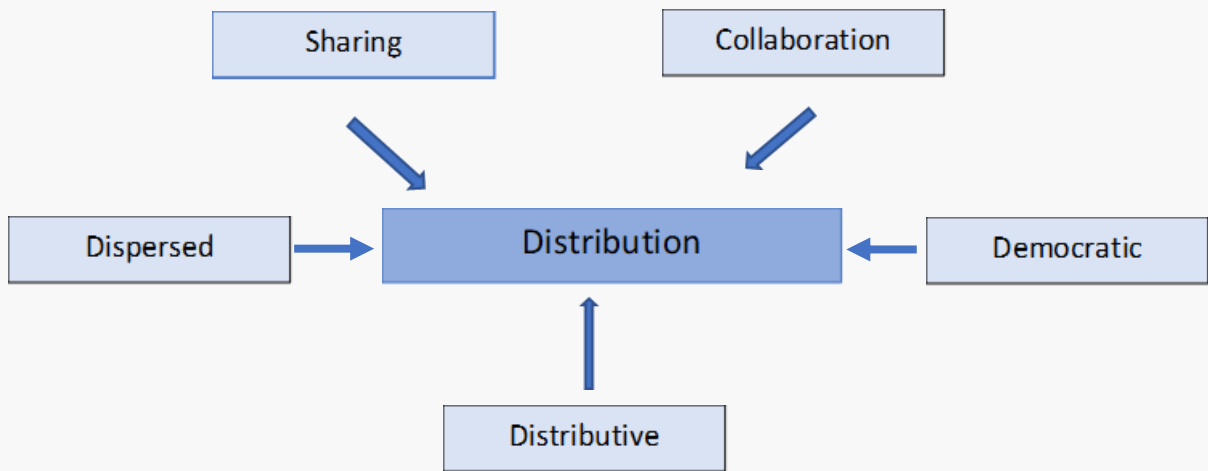
Whilst recognising the diversity of leadership distribution, Spillane identified three types of arrangement, all of which could co-exist. First, Spillane (2006) noted division of labour where leaders in different positions carried out various leadership functions, although patterns differed between schools. Second, co-performance which ‘involves two or more leaders performing a leadership function or routine in a collaborated fashion’, (Spillane, 2006, p.39).

Finally, parallel performance, in which 'leaders don't always work in a collaborated manner; they often work in parallel to execute the same leadership functions or routine and in so doing duplicate one another's work', (Spillane, 2006, p.42). All these forms of distribution could exist by design, accident or result from crisis (Spillane 2006, p.51) and did not necessarily result in leaders pulling in the same direction.

However, it is the practice element of Spillane's (2006) model, in which DL was seen as activity, that was central to his distributed perspective. Spillane's (2006) work was theoretically underpinned by activity theory and distributed cognition through which social context was seen as an integral part of human activity rather than just its context. In summarising his position Spillane (2006, p.14) noted: 'Leadership practice takes place in the interaction of leaders, followers and their situation. It is stretched over individuals who have responsibility for leadership routines.' Spillane (2006) argued that leaders not only influenced followers, but were also influenced by them, making them constitutive of leadership. Similarly, aspects of the situation such as artefacts, routines, tools, culture and language were representations of ideas which mediate and shape interactions between leaders and followers.

Much confusion around DL stemmed from areas of overlap with other related forms of leadership such as shared, collaborative, democratic and participative leadership which Harris (2008, p.173) contended 'has resulted in both the misuse of the term to mean any form of team or shared leadership practice.' Spillane (2006 p.23) however, argued that DL was distinct from other forms of shared leadership in that it is an analytical tool through which to explore leadership with the situation being the unit of analysis.

**Figure 1: Model of distribution (Oduro, 2004)**



Oduro (2004) developed a model (figure 1) which sheds further light on the relationship between DL and other types of leadership. He examined definitions of dispersed, collaborative, democratic, distributive and shared leadership, which shared the central notion that leadership was not the domain of one person. Dispersed leadership was seen as leadership activity that took place at different points in an organisation and differed from delegation which was dependent on an individual leader. Collaborative leadership involved partnership work, between groups either inside an organisation or beyond it. Democratic leadership contained four strands: 1) encouragement by a formal leader to participate in leadership; 2) sharing of power and information; 3) building a sense of self-worth in others; and 4) inspiring others to undertake activities. Citing Vroom and Yetton (1973) Oduro (2004) described democratic leadership as being either consultative or participative. Shared leadership emerged from social relationships and was founded on trust, openness, appreciation, and respect. Finally, distributive leadership, involved taking leadership as a right. Oduro (2004) cited MacBeath (2004) in contrasting this to DL which was conferred by the Headteacher. MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse, (2004, p.11) viewed distributive leadership

as based on 'specific expertise'. DL was not seen by Oduro (2004, p.8) as something new, but rather 'an intellectual label that seeks to reinforce the fact that leadership needs to be a shared activity in schools.' Interestingly, Oduro (2004, p.8) drew a clear distinction between delegation, which he saw as linked to the 'heroic' leader, and DL which was not in the gift of the Headteacher and as such a 'post heroic' form.

Bennett *et al.* (2003, p.3) tried to capture what was at the heart of DL, and argued that DL was best understood as 'a way of thinking about leadership,' rather than a leadership technique:

Distributed leadership is not something 'done' by an individual 'to' others, or a set of individual actions through which people contribute to a group or organization...[it]is a group activity that works through and within relationships, rather than individual action.

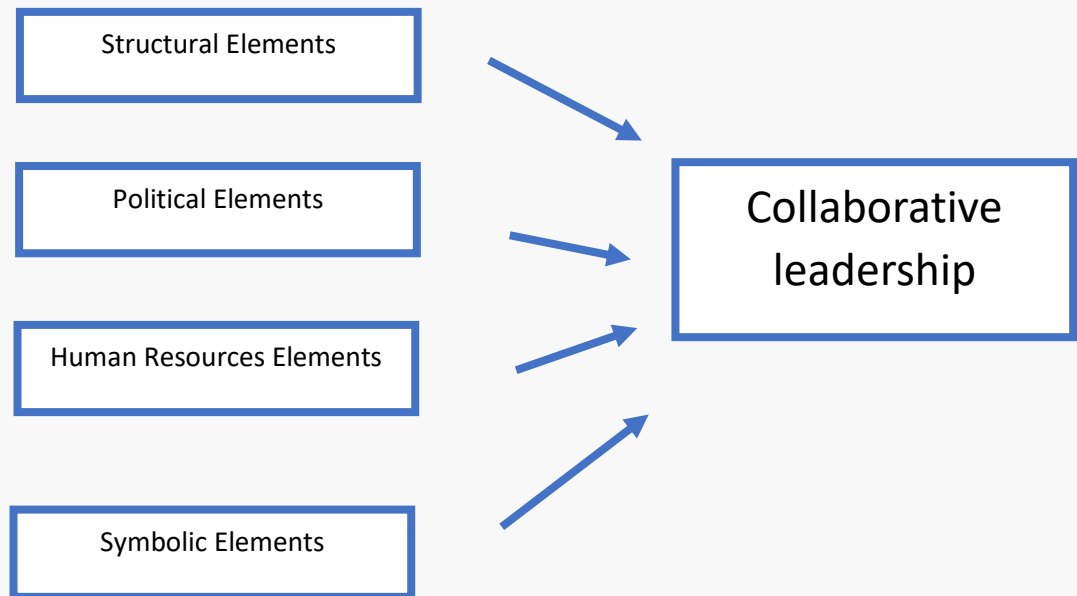
Bennett *et al.* (2003, p.7) clarified this further by identifying three points of agreement within the literature:

1. 'Leadership is an emergent property of a group or network of interacting individuals.'
2. 'There is openness to the boundaries of leadership'.
3. 'Varieties of expertise are distributed across the many, not the few.'

### **2.2.2 Collaborative Leadership**

Telford (1996, p.23) developed a conceptual framework for collaborative leadership which integrated 'collaborative elements of leadership', into four conceptual frames based on Bolman and Deal's Frames of Leadership (Bolman and Deal, 1991, cited in Telford. 1996) as shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Elements of collaborative Leadership (Telford, 1996, p.26)**



Each element covered a wide range of descriptors recognising the breadth of collaborative leadership (Figure 3). The elements were also inextricably intertwined and all pervasive. Structural elements related to formal roles and relationships, through which leaders structured stakeholders' involvement in decision-making to support a shared vision and agreed ways of implementing policies. Typical of this frame were flat hierarchies, open communication, listening, respecting and empowering people. Human resource elements referred to professional development through mutual sharing of expertise by staff which was encouraged by leaders. The principal focus of the school was on teaching and learning with high levels of teacher commitment. Political elements focused on the use of discussion and compromise to reach agreement. Where disagreement occurred, this was seen as part of a journey towards developing shared goals.

**Figure 3: Elements of collaboration. (Telford, 1996, pp.23-25)**

Structural Frame	Human Resource Frame	Political Frame	Symbolic Frame
Democratic processes Leadership density Direction/vision Shared goals Shared responsibility Roles Policy processes Programme procedures Coordination Planning Listening	Centrality of teaching and learning Strong sense of community Value and regard for Professional Development Teachers as curriculum leaders Parents as co-partners Teams Teachers teaching teachers Professional honesty Support, praise and trust Acceptance Sharing Continuous learning Continuous improvement Positive student/staff relations Staff cohesion.	Absence of hierarchy Power-sharing Open discussion Consensus Majority rule Shared responsibility Using authority Using influence Diffusing conflict Agreed-upon 'political behaviour' Participatory decision-making procedures Disagreements not seen as disruptive Absence of sub-groups Negotiation Coalitions Networks Frank, open and frequent communication	Beliefs Values Attitudes Norms of behaviour Shared meanings Symbols Rituals Ceremonies.

Telford (1996 pp.26-27) described symbolic elements as:

...characterised by deep-seated, often unspoken, shared beliefs, values and attitudes which bring about norms of interaction, friendly, informal staff relations and a pervasive camaraderie.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) noted that groups and individuals were interdependent which harnessed relationships. Telford (1996) suggested that as a result, teachers were personally and collectively empowered, confident, and able to respond to complex demands at school.

In considering the impact of collaborative leadership on schools Telford (1996, p.27) concluded:

Fully functioning collaborative leadership ensures that the vision of the school becomes in Sergiovanni and Starratt's (1988, p.213) terms, 'institutionalised' .....changing the school into one of achievement and success.

Links between collaboration and school improvement will be explored in section 2.3.

### **2.2.3 School Culture**

Collaborative leadership has been described as a phenomenon that is deeply embedded in the culture of a school (Telford, 1996). Given DL's focus on relationships (Spillane, 2006) an exploration of school culture in this context is important in understanding the foundation upon which DL operates.

Robbins, 2001 (cited in Zulu, Murray and Strydom, 2004, p.211) defined organisational culture as: 'the social glue that holds an organisation together', or more simply as Deal and Kennedy (1983, cited in Stoll and Fink, 1996, p.81) stated, 'the way we do things round here.' Schein



(1985, cited in Stoll and Fink 1996, p.81) noted that culture includes language, rituals, dominant values, the organisation's philosophy, the rules through which people relate, the feeling and climate of the organisation, and is:

the deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization, that operate unconsciously, and that define in a basic "taken-for-granted" fashion an organisation's view of itself and its environment.

In summing up the importance of culture, Stoll and Fink (1996, p.82) perceived it as 'the lens through which the world is viewed'.

Hargreaves (1994, cited in Stoll and Fink, 1996) commented that sometimes cultures can be framed and formed inside structures although Stoll and Fink (1996, p84) noted that:

Culture can only be affected indirectly, whereas structure can be changed. The difficulty arises that in changing structures without changes in school culture change is likely to be superficial.

Bolman and Deal (1991, cited in Stoll and Fink, 1996) also noted that culture was dynamic. It was created by participants and could change with new members. It often acted as a stabilising force, but this was not always the case. Stoll and Fink (1996) acknowledged that as well as whole school cultures, sub-cultures also existed, which could potentially be divisive. Rossman, Corbett and Firestone (cited in Stoll and Fink, 1996) summarised cultural change as happening in three ways: 1) evolutionary which is unplanned; 2) Additive, where norms are modified; and 3) transformative, which involves a deliberate change to values, norms, and beliefs. The latter can be associated with school improvement.

#### 2.2.4 Power and Empowerment

Central to DL is the concept of empowerment. Harris (2003a, p.75) stated: 'This model of leadership implies a redistribution of power and a realignment of authority within the organisation'. Jackson (in Harris and Lambert, 2003, p. xvi-xvii) viewed DL as a process of releasing intellectual capital in which the Headteacher had a co-ordinating role: 'The role of the 'leader' in this scenario is to harness, focus, liberate, empower and align that leadership towards common purposes and, by so doing, to grow, to release and to focus its capacity'.

Within this process Jackson (in Harris and Lambert, 2003, p. xvii) saw hierarchical structures as an obstacle and contended instead that: 'It is about creating spaces, the contexts and the opportunities for expansion, enhancement and growth among all.' Jackson (in Harris and Lambert, 2003) also argued that within this framework leadership was not imposed or assumed but was given by those being led. Thus, Jackson contrasted distribution to delegation which occurred in power-based relationships and involved the passing on of tasks.

As with DL itself, the literature offered different conceptualisations of empowerment, and in contrast to Jackson's (in Harris and Lambert, 2003) assertions, mostly operated in hierarchical settings. Thus, Hairon and Goh (2015, p.4), in a study of 1232 Singapore schools, defined empowerment as 'investing in subordinates the power to make decisions.' Operating in this way, they found that empowerment was bounded. Firstly, leaders were reluctant to give up key operational decisions to staff beyond their areas of responsibility. Secondly, leaders who gave power expected to be kept informed. Thirdly, empowerment was bounded in that decisions were co-ordinated and aligned with school goals. The authors recognised that their findings might be influenced by cultural differences between Asian and Western systems.

The relationship between power, authority and empowerment has been widely critiqued in the literature. This will be explored when considering criticisms of DL (2.2.10).

### 2.2.5 Senior Leadership Teams (SLTs)

Bush and Glover (2012, pp.32-33) argued that ‘SLTs can be regarded as a vehicle for the implementation of DL’ but cautioned that this relationship remained under-researched.

**Figure 4: Wallace’s contingency model for SMT effectiveness (2001, p.164)**

Headteacher			
	Norms	Management hierarchy	Equal contribution
Other SMT members+	Management hierarchy	<p><b>Moderate gain, low strain</b> (new ideas, Head’s seniority accepted, outcomes acceptable to Head)</p> <p><b>Moderate SMT synergy</b></p>	<p><b>Low gain, Low strain</b> (Head encourages, others offer minimal ideas, willing to compromise, outcomes acceptable to Head)</p> <p><b>Disengagement (Low SMT synergy)</b></p>
	Equal contribution	<p><b>No gain, high strain</b> (Head pulls rank, others do not accept Head’s seniority, no consensus, outcomes not acceptable to Head)</p> <p><b>Open conflict (no SMT synergy)</b></p>	<p><b>High gain, low strain</b> (Many ideas, SMT members willing to compromise, outcomes acceptable to Head)</p> <p><b>High SMT synergy</b></p>

Wallace (2001) developed a speculative contingency model for Senior Management Team (SMT) effectiveness which explored the operation of DL through SMTs (Figure 4). Wallace (2001) focused on the interaction between team members, including the Headteacher, in the context of contradictory beliefs in a management hierarchy set against the entitlement of an SMT to make an equal contribution. Wallace (2001) identified the level of synergy within the team as being key to its success and argued that it was likely to be highest where both the Headteacher and SMT were committed to equality of contribution. Such a relationship supported the generation of new ideas and outcomes that were acceptable to the Headteacher because the group was flexible enough to revert to a hierarchical position, with the Headteacher being directive, when there were differences within the group.

Bush and Glover (2012) researched high performing leadership teams in 9 schools, including two special schools. They found that teams were composed of long serving staff which supported the implementation of a clear vision. Structures were in place to ensure there was good coverage of key areas and time was allocated for team meetings. There was clarity about roles and purpose: staff were clear that their focus was on strategic issues such as new initiatives. The importance of shared values and purpose supported by interpersonal relationships was recognised. Reflecting this, new appointments were often made internally, with Headteachers seeing commitment to meeting pupil needs, good interpersonal skills, and the ability to think strategically as more important than specific skills. Bush and Glover's (2012) senior leadership teams, like Wallace's (2001), highlighted the importance of good communication with staff to avoid isolation. SLT unity was important and ascribed by interviewees to factors such as respect for the Headteacher or commitment to the school. Finally, Bush and Glover (2012, p.33) found that headteachers were able to determine their

own role and that the kind of DL evidenced was ‘a nuanced approach, mixing solo and team leadership’. It also resonated with Wallace’s (2001) model in which headteachers retained ‘considerable residual power’ (Bush and Glover 2012, p.34).

### **2.2.6 Trust and Accountability**

The role of trust within empowerment featured prominently in the literature, from which Coleman (2012, p.87) developed the following definition: ‘Trust is confidence in the integrity and abilities of another which serves as a basis for discretionary individual or collective action.’ In extending this definition, Bryk and Schneider (2002) identified three types of trust of which relational trust was particularly relevant to the concept of empowerment. Relational trust was characterised firstly, by respect, which recognised the integrity of peers with whom they are interdependent, secondly, professional competence, thirdly, personal regard for others and fourthly, integrity. Additionally, MacBeath (2005) argued that trust exists at four levels; individual trust, which equates with trustworthiness; interpersonal trust, which is reciprocal; whole school or organisational trust; and social trust which operates beyond the school.

The development of a culture of trust is fundamental to DL (MacBeath, 2005). Bryk and Schneider (2002, cited in Fullan 2003, p.64) contended this was the responsibility of headteachers and shed some light on how this might happen.

Principals establish both respect and personal regard when they acknowledge vulnerabilities of others, actively listen to their concerns and eschew arbitrary actions. If principals couple this with a compelling school vision, and if their behaviour can be understood as advancing this vision their integrity is affirmed, then assuming principals

are competent in the management of day-to-day school affairs an overall ethos conducive to trust is likely to emerge.

However, the development of a culture of trust posed a risk to headteachers (Wallace, 2001). Whilst government policy promoted DL and evaluated school leadership throughout the organisation, it also held headteachers accountable for school performance (Storey, 2004). In this context sharing leadership became risky as headteachers may not succeed in securing commitment to management agendas, (Hatcher, 2005), or it may result in a 'greater distribution of incompetence', (Timperley, 2005, p.417). More worryingly, DL could be misused to disempower and even derail formal leadership (Harris, 2014). In this situation MacBeath (2005, p.353) posited that many headteachers found difficulty in 'letting go' of their role as ultimate decision maker.

The development of an authentic culture of trust within government accountability frameworks also required considerable skill of headteachers. MacBeath (2005, p.353) summarised this:

While working to generate trust heads also have to hold staff to account through performance monitoring, comparative benchmarking and scrutiny of attainment data which, they acknowledge, can tell a partial and misleading story and hold teachers to account for things they do not believe.

Further, headteachers needed to learn when to consult, when to make decisions by consensus and when to command. However, MacBeath (2009) went on to argue that accountability could build rather than erode trust where there was congruence between individual trustworthiness, organisational trust and alignment at leadership level. This rested on

developing openness within the organisation, including openness to critique and challenge by formal leaders. Elmore (2003, p.17, cited in MacBeath, 2009, p.56) described this as 'internal accountability', which he argued was needed to ensure that trust and external accountability existed side-by-side. Additionally, Harris (2014) contended that empowering others through trust was indicative of strong leadership. She suggested that leadership was much broader than statutory responsibilities and was about seeking new opportunities for school improvement. Similarly, Hargreaves *et al.* (2010, cited in Harris, 2014) argued that high performing leaders sought out new challenges, thrived at taking risks and doing things differently to other schools. Thus, heads set the strategic direction of the school for DL to be successfully enacted (Murphy *et al.*, 2009).

### **2.2.7 Models of Distributed Leadership**

Although DL offered a systemic perspective on leadership, it allowed for several different 'configurations' (Gronn, 2002a, p.390) of leadership practice, with the way it was distributed being most salient (Spillane, 2006). In these section five taxonomies of distribution will be reviewed. These models are relevant to the role of the Headteacher in DL which will be considered in section 2.2.9. Each also took a different perspective: Gronn (2002a) and Spillane (2006) focused on patterns of interaction, whilst Leithwood *et al.* (2006), Ritchie and Woods (2007) and MacBeath (2005 and 2009) focused on ways in which it was institutionalised.

Figure 5: Frameworks of distributed leadership (Bolden, 2011, p.258)

Gronn (2002a)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Spontaneous collaboration:</b> Groups of individuals with differing skills, knowledge and/or capabilities come together to complete a task/project and then disband.</li> <li>• <b>Intuitive working relations:</b> Two or more individuals develop close working relations over time until 'leadership is manifest in the shared role space encompassed by their relationship', (Gronn, 2002a p.430)</li> <li>• <b>Institutionalised practice:</b> Enduring organizational structures (e.g. committees and teams) are put in place to facilitate collaboration between individuals.</li> </ul>
Leithwood <i>et al.</i> (2006)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Planful alignment:</b> Following consultation, resources and responsibilities are deliberately distributed to those individuals and/or groups best placed to lead a function or task.</li> <li>• <b>Spontaneous alignment:</b> Leadership, tasks and functions are distributed in an unplanned way yet, 'tacit and intuitive decisions about who should perform which leadership functions result in a fortuitous alignment of functions across leadership sources', (Harris <i>et al.</i>, 2007, p.344)</li> <li>• <b>Spontaneous misalignment:</b> As above, leadership is distributed in an unplanned manner, yet in this case the outcome is less fortuitous and there is misalignment of leadership activities.</li> <li>• <b>Anarchic misalignment:</b> Leaders pursue their own goals independently of one another and there is 'active rejection on the part of some or many organizational, of influence from others about what they should be doing in their own sphere of influence' (Leithwood <i>et al.</i>, 2006, p.344).</li> </ul>
Spillane (2006)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Collaborated distribution:</b> Two or more individuals work together in time and place to execute the same leadership routine.</li> <li>• <b>Collective distribution:</b> Two or more individuals work separately but interdependently to enact a leadership routine.</li> <li>• <b>Co-ordinated distribution:</b> Two or more individuals work in sequence to complete a leadership routine.</li> </ul>



Gronn (2002a) focused on 'concertive' action and identified three patterns of conjoint activity which represented successive steps towards institutionalisation, as summarised in Figure 5. Firstly, Gronn (2002a, p.430) outlined 'spontaneous collaboration', whereby 'sets of two or three individuals with differing skills and abilities, perhaps from across different organizational levels, pool their expertise and regularise their conduct to solve a problem, after which they may disband'. Secondly, Gronn (2002a, p.430) identified 'intuitive working relations' where leadership was attributed by colleagues and developed out of close working relationships. Thirdly was 'institutionalised practice', in which formal structures were institutionalised.

Gronn (2009a, p.19), later reviewed this position, and contended that the term 'hybrid leadership', should replace DL. Gronn (2009a, p.38) argued that individualized and distributed patterns of leadership existed side-by-side operating as part of an 'ongoing work in progress' in an attempt by schools to accommodate contingency.

Like Gronn (2002a), Spillane (2006) focused on interaction but did not view his patterns as being successive steps in the institutionalisation of DL in an organisation as outlined in Figure 5. Spillane's (2006, p.60) 'co performance' arrangement identified three patterns of interaction between leaders. Firstly, collaborated distribution in which leaders 'work together in place and time to execute the same leadership routine'. Secondly, collective distribution, in which leaders 'enact a leadership routine by working separately, but independently', and thirdly, co-ordinated distribution in which interdependency came from routines being performed in a sequence.

Leithwood, *et al.*'s (2007) model which is summarised in Figure 5, focused on how far leadership functions were deliberately aligned to sources of leadership and therefore had

some parallels with Gronn's (2002a) model. Leithwood, *et al.* (2007, p.40) identified 4 forms of alignment which they linked to organisational 'productivity':

- Planful alignment
- Spontaneous alignment
- Spontaneous misalignment
- Anarchic misalignment

Planful alignment was comparable to Gronn's (2006) institutionalised alignment, in that leaders within the organisation agreed in advance which individuals were best placed to perform each leadership function. Leithwood *et al.* (2007) assumed that such planning would be most productive. This pattern was linked to shared values in which decisions were made based on reflection and discussion, colleagues trusted each other, understood each other's leadership capacities and there was commitment to whole school goals and co-operation. Leithwood *et al.* (2007) found this was most likely where focused leadership was shown by principals and relied on enabling structures or monitoring by the principal.

Spontaneous alignment was comparable to Gronn's (2006) spontaneous collaboration and differed from planful alignment in that functions were distributed intuitively. This resulted in a 'fortuitous' (Leithwood *et al.*, 2007, p.41) alignment of leadership functions, although there was no guarantee that this would be the case. In the short term there was no ill effect on productivity, but in the longer term the lack of planning could reduce a school's ability to address future challenges. Values linked to this model were the use of gut feelings to make decisions, mutual trust between colleagues, idealistic views about colleague's capacities, commitment to shared goals and co-operation.

Spontaneous misalignment occurred in the same way as spontaneous alignment and was underpinned by the same values as the latter, although due to misalignment, outcomes were adversely affected.

Finally, anarchic misalignment occurred where leaders within an organisation rejected influence from other leaders where it related to their own areas of responsibility, as a result of which the organisation became fractured, and teams competed over goals and resources. Values linked to anarchic alignment included decision-making in own teams based on discussion and reflection, mistrust of motives and capacities of others, commitment to own units' goals, and competition with others.

MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse (2004) developed a taxonomy of distribution consisting of six categories:

- Formal distribution
- Pragmatic distribution
- Strategic distribution
- Incremental distribution
- Opportunistic distribution
- Cultural distribution

Formal distribution was characterised by hierarchical structures and was often linked to the early stages of headship where a new headteacher inherited an existing structure. The distribution of leadership was bounded by individual roles and job descriptions which allocated responsibility and encouraged a sense of ownership and empowerment, whilst

maintaining clear lines of accountability. Formal distribution was often based on expertise, with the Headteacher taking a supporting role.

Pragmatic distribution was more *ad hoc*, taking the form of short-term problem solving, whereby the Headteacher asked staff, based on her/his knowledge of individual capabilities and capacities to take on additional responsibilities in times of high workload.

Strategic distribution was focused on the longer-term view of school improvement, through carefully thought-out new appointments, which focused on recruiting team players who, between them, had the flexibility to adapt to changing situations. Thus, the quality of leadership was being 'distributed between people, as joint or team leadership', (Macbeath, 2009, p.48). In formal, pragmatic and strategic distribution, a top-down stance was maintained.

By contrast incremental distribution was distinguished by the release of top-down control and occurred when headteachers became more confident in their role. Capacity to lead was seen to exist in anyone. Emphasis was therefore on knowing staff, relationships and developing talent through professional development.

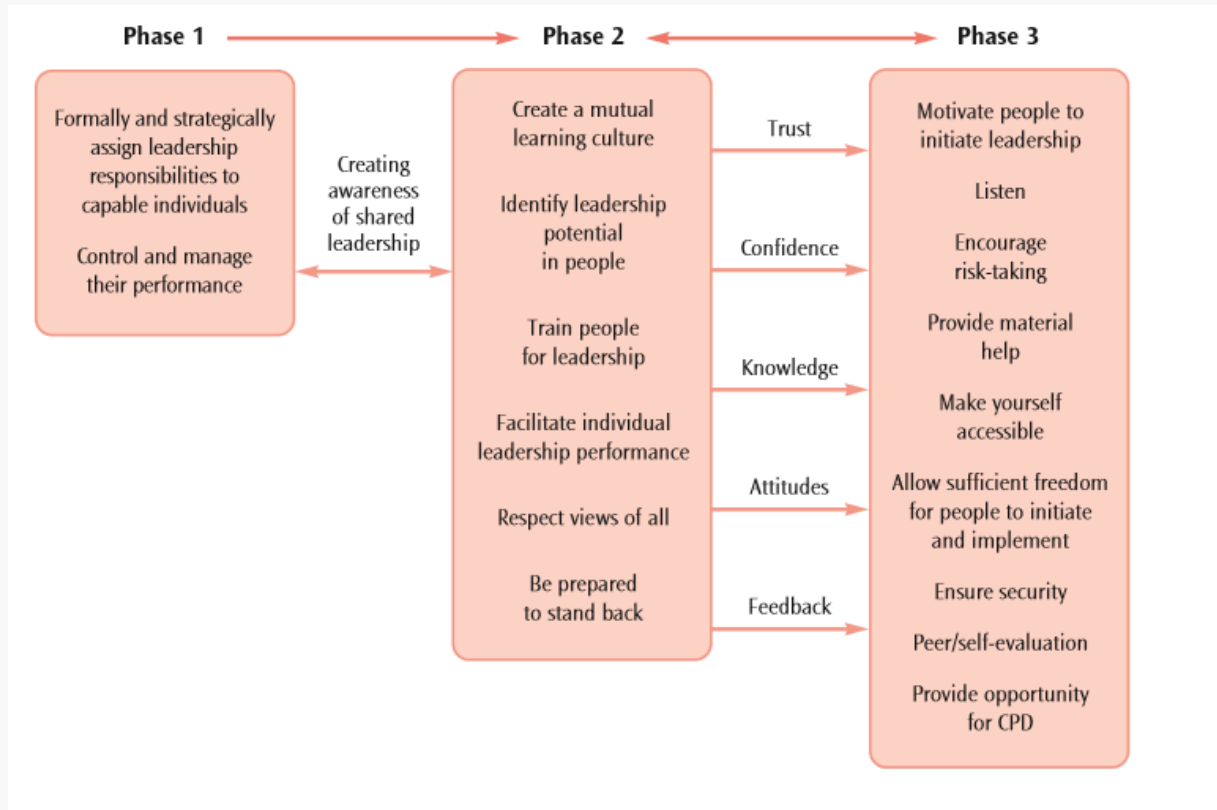
Opportunistic distribution moved further towards bottom-up processes. MacBeath (2009, pp.50-51) wrote: 'It involves a symbiotic relationship in which ambitious and energetic members of staff are keen to take on leadership roles and receive encouragement from senior leaders', and was 'intuitive, interdependent and implicit'. Clarity and cohesiveness of purpose was a precondition of opportunistic distribution to avoid staff leading in directions contrary to the school vision.

Finally, through cultural distribution leadership was focused on activities rather than roles. Leadership was exercised spontaneously and collaboratively with no identification of leaders and followers. MacBeath (2009, p.52) suggested: 'It switches the emphasis from individual leadership to a community of people working together to a common end.' Growth was promoted through nurturing. MacBeath (2009) was clear, however, that such a culture did not occur by chance, but was carefully constructed on a set up values.

MacBeath (2009, p.54) found that individual schools and leaders did not have a perfect fit with any one category and recognised that the nature of distribution was affected by contextual factors including the Headteacher (his/her personality, experience, confidence, length of service and influence over other leaders), the school's history and culture (its stage of development, legacies from previous headteachers, expectations and organizational memories, recruitment and retention) and external factors (the range and strength of local regional and national policies). MacBeath (2009) also recognised that patterns of distribution changed within organisations from time to time depending on changing situations, as contended by Gronn (2009a). MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse, (2004, p.34) posited that DL could best be understood as a developmental process which was 'potentially a condition for change and an outcome of change'.

Additionally, MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse (2004) linked their taxonomy to a three-phase model for sustaining DL which related to the career stage of the Headteacher (Figure 6.)

**Figure 6: Model for sustaining distributed leadership (MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse, 2004, p.47)**



Phase 1 was linked to the early stages of headship and formal leadership. At this stage Headteachers were getting to know the structures, culture and history of their school. As they began to identify leadership needs and capabilities of staff, they delegated responsibilities either formally or strategically, through nurturing existing staff or making external appointments. This stage was characterised by a performative culture aimed at controlling and monitoring the progress of tasks. However, as leaders gained skills the Headteacher might enable them to share their experience.

In Phase 2 the emphasis was on development and transformation. The scope of leadership was widened as the Headteacher created an environment that encouraged the input of ideas

across the organisation. Efforts were made to develop shared leadership, a shared vision and to involve staff in decision-making including planning, developing, and evaluating school policy to give them a sense of ownership. People were also trained in leadership. During this phase, the Headteacher focused on building a learning culture where teachers collaborated and learned from each other and reflected on their work, both formally and informally, to identify their own learning needs.

Finally, Phase 3 concerned sustainability. The culture was characterised by mutual trust, self-confidence, and shared goals. Staff felt able to challenge each other or tolerate differences of practice. The roles of leaders and followers could be interchangeable depending on the situation with leadership being seized opportunistically. The Headteacher was often characterised as 'standing back' with cultures developing organically (MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse, 2004 pp.46-47).

A final model, closely aligned to MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse, (2004) was developed by Ritchie and Woods (2007), which identified degrees of distribution and categorised schools as having embedded, developing or emerging DL. Ritchie and Woods (2007) developed a tool which used 12 indicators of distribution combined with a ratings scale as summarised in Figure 7. Schools that showed clear evidence of all 12 factors combined with a non-hierarchical structure, autonomous actions, internal/bottom-up driven development, informal leadership and spontaneously developing DL were identified as having embedded DL. Where some of the 12 factors were identified along with hierarchical structures, low staff autonomy, external/top-down driven development, formal and institutional leadership, schools were identified as emerging. Finally, where some factors were identified along with a mixed pattern

of ratings, schools were identified as developing. They found that the degree of distribution depended on the interaction of structure and agency and varied across settings.

**Figure 7: Ritchie and Woods (2007, p.372) model of distribution**

Indicators of distribution	
1.	School has explicit values, ethos and aims
2.	Collaborative culture with structures to foster collaboration and teamwork
3.	Staff are challenged and motivated
4.	Staff identify as learners
5.	Staff feel valued
6.	Staff feel trusted and well supported by headteacher
7.	Staff feel ownership of school's vision
8.	Staff involved in creating, developing and sharing collective vision
9.	Staff aware of talents and school's impact on their skill acquisition and leadership potential
10.	Staff relish responsibilities and opportunities given
11.	Staff feel supported and enabled to take risks and supported
12.	Staff appreciate the high degrees of autonomy they have
Ratings continua (Bennett <i>et al.</i> ,2003)	
Schools were hierarchical/non- hierarchical	
Staff actions were controlled/autonomous	
Sources of change and development were external/top down or internal/bottom up	
Leadership was position/ informal	
DL was institutional/spontaneous.	

These models were used as a tool for analysis and a point of comparison for data collected in the research.



## 2.2.8 Teacher Leadership

Harris and Lambert (2003) considered TL to be an integral part of DL. This section will explore TL's theoretical links with DL, the diverse definitions of TL and aim to understand what it looks like in practice through a model developed by Fairman and Mackenzie, (2012). The literature around TL also includes references to special education, which will be reviewed.

### 2.2.8.1 Theoretical Underpinning

Muijs and Harris (2003, p.440) contended that 'the literature and associated empirical work on TL provides an important starting point in understanding and illuminating how DL works in schools.' It differed from DL in that it was narrower and related only to leadership by teachers but was also broader in that it extended beyond formal leadership roles. Muijs and Harris (2006, p.440) provided conceptual clarity to this relationship as follows:

First, it incorporates the activities of multiple groups of individuals in a school who work at guiding and mobilizing staff in the instructional change process. Second, it implies a social distribution of leadership where leadership function is stretched over the work of a number of individuals and where the leadership task is accomplished through the interaction of multiple leaders. Third, it implies interdependency rather than dependency embracing how leaders of various kinds and in various roles share responsibility.

Muijs and Harris (2006 p.439) suggested TL was based on a redistribution of power in the school and was 'centrally concerned with forms of empowerment and agency which are also at the core of DL theory.' These links are clearly reflected in TL's rationale. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001, cited in Muijs and Harris, 2003) contended that TL's main objective was to

develop PLCs in schools. While Gehrke, (1991, cited in Muijs and Harris, 2003) saw TL as empowering teachers to become involved in school decision-making. Paradoxically, the number of teacher leaders grew to support increased accountability led initiatives (Wenner and Campbell, 2017). Nevertheless, in a review of the literature around TL between 1980 and 2004, York-Barr and Duke (2004 p.291) thought it was 'largely atheoretical'. A subsequent literature review from 2004-2013, by Wenner and Campbell (2017 p.161), concluded that TL was still only 'partially theoretical', but found that DL was the 'best theory' with 19% of the literature applying this theoretical framework. However, as DL was so varied in its definitions, they questioned how useful this was for future research.

#### **2.2.8.2 Definitions of Teacher Leadership**

TL was defined in different ways in the literature with 'overlapping and competing definitions of the term' (Harris and Muijs, 2006, p.438). Indeed, teacher leaders themselves did not always recognise their work as leadership, instead seeing leadership as something that is in hierarchical roles (Fairman and Mackenzie, 2015). Nevertheless, two common elements within these definitions were that teacher leaders were highly skilled teachers who were class based for most of their time, but also took on leadership roles outside the classroom (Muijs and Harris, 2003; Wenner and Campbell, 2017). This definition took in both formal leadership roles, such as the co-ordination of a subject or Key Stage (Hirsh and Segolsson, 2019) and informal leadership roles where leadership was exercised without any position or designation (Harris and Muijs, 2005), with teachers initiating action in the desire to improve student learning, (Frost and Durrant, 2003; Fairman and Mackenzie, 2015). Poekert, Alexandrou and Shannon (2016) contended this distinction was inconsequential, seeing leadership as a stance.

Of greater importance, they argued, was the way in which their leadership was valued by their peers.

Beyond this broad agreement, TL's complexity was reflected in the varying definitions in the literature. Harris and Lambert (2003, p.24) described it as 'broad-based, skilful involvement in the work of leadership', which was synonymous with building leadership capacity. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001, p.17, cited in Muijs and Harris, 2003, p.438) added further concepts by defining teacher leaders as individuals who 'identify with and contribute to a community of teacher-learners and leaders, and influence others towards improved educational practice'.

Day and Harris (2002) provided additional insight into TL in practice by describing it in terms of four discrete dimensions: firstly, brokering links within schools to gain access to opportunities which would promote improvement; secondly, participation, whereby teachers were enabled to feel ownership; thirdly, mediation, whereby teachers could share expertise and information. Their fourth and most important dimension was building relationships with other teachers which enabled shared learning. Others stressed the importance of research and inquiry (Harris and Lambert, 2003; Poekert, Alexandrou and Shannon, 2016).

Muijs and Harris' (2006, pp.964-965) described TL as an organisational quality and a 'form of professional initiative and learning' composed of 5 dimensions: shared decision-making about developmental work, collaboration aimed at improved teaching and learning, active participation in the school improvement process, professional learning, and activism focused on bringing about change and development for the school. Lambert (1998, p.5) brought many of these elements together in describing TL as 'the ability of those within a school to work

together, constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively' which she described as Constructivist Leadership.

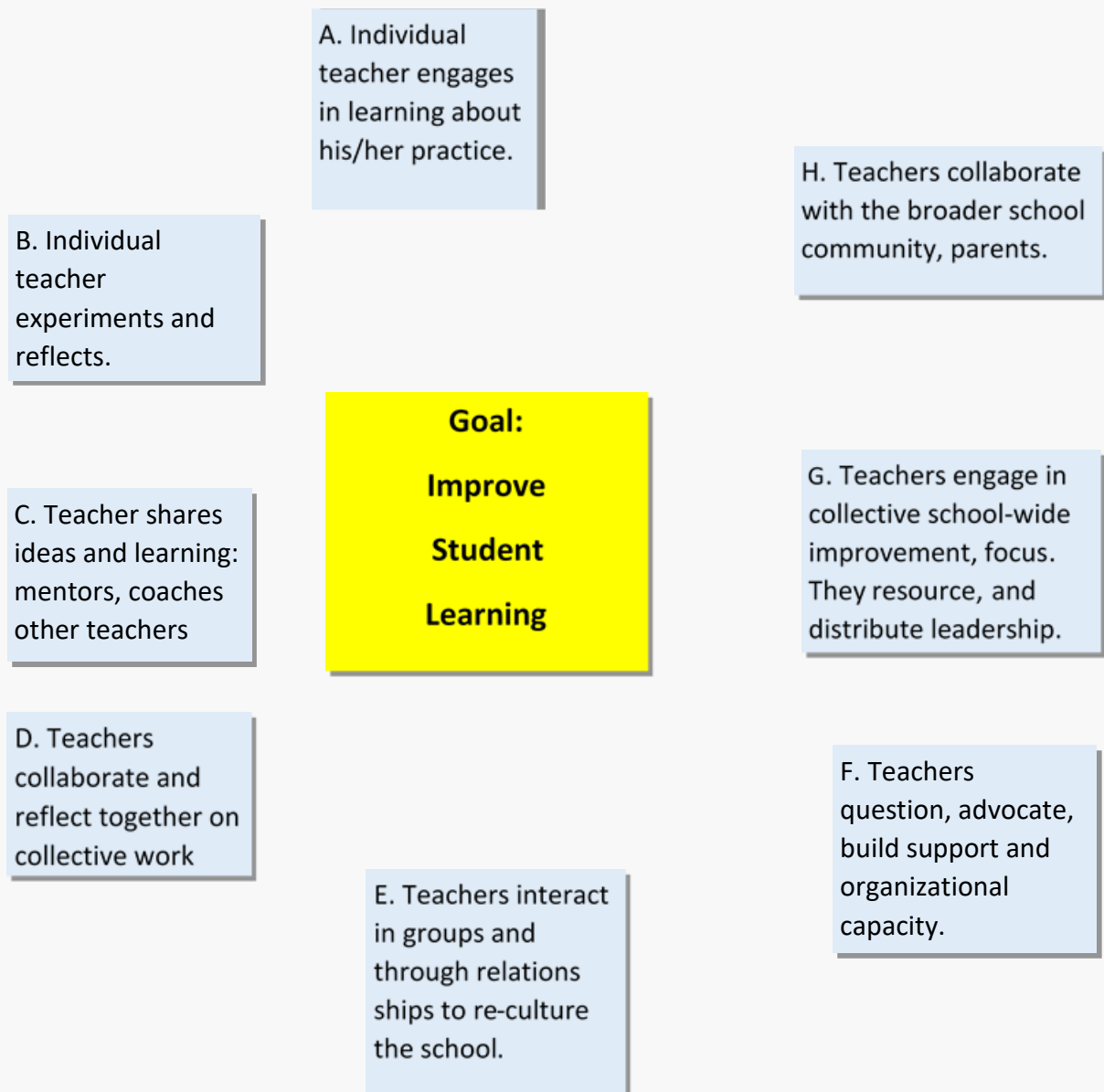
In terms of its goals, TL was widely seen as improving the quality of teacher and student learning (Fairman and Mackenzie, 2015; Poekert, Alexandrou and Shannon, 2016). York-Barr and Duke (2004, p.288) brought many of these elements together stating: 'TL is the process by which teacher leaders individually and collectively influence their colleagues, principals and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student achievement'.

#### **2.2.8.3 Fairman and Mackenzie's Model of Teacher Leadership (2012)**

Fairman and Mackenzie (2012) developed a model of TL called 'Spheres of Teacher Leadership Action for Learning' in which they conceptualised the relationship between teachers and colleagues as one of influence (Figure 8). Fairman and Mackenzie (2012) explored the way in which teacher leaders influenced others, by considering the contexts, initiation, scope and focus of TL. They found that TL was initiated by teachers, rather than principals, and aimed at improving student learning. However, beyond that it was a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon. Fairman and Mackenzie (2012) conceptualised teachers' leadership work as spheres of activity which occurred in different settings, including work in individual classrooms, work across the whole school and with groups beyond the school, being both direct and indirect in nature. Fairman and Mackenzie's (2012) model was presented as a continuum, although teachers often worked in multiple spheres or jumped stages. Their model also focused on informal interactions between teachers in which they led with others and included strategies such as modelling, coaching, advocating change and collaboration.

Fairman and Mackenzie's (2012) study, thus, illustrated the multi-faceted nature of TL in action and provided a framework for analysis.

**Figure 8: Spheres of Teacher Leadership Action for Learning (Fairman and Mackenzie, 2012, p.231)**



#### 2.2.8.4 Teacher Leadership and Special Education

Billingsley (2007) was unable to find any studies around TL in special education, citing only a related study by Powers, Rayner and Gunter (2001) which identified a lack of professional development opportunities for special school leaders, and wider studies which included special education teachers. Amongst the latter group Billingsley (2007) cited two examples of TL in schools which partnered universities and professional associations in supporting new teachers, developing inquiry approaches, raising pupil achievement, and supporting teacher development, as part of Professional Development Schools (PDS) in America. Both studies related to School 1 in this project. In a study by Epanchin and Colucci (2002), which aimed to provide professional development for teachers, teacher leaders acted as mentors, engaged in research and took on university clinical roles. Participants found the experience to be a positive one, commenting on their personal satisfaction at sharing their passion for teaching and developing increased confidence because of positive feedback from teachers. In another PDS study of a middle school Peters (2002, cited in Billingsley, 2007, p.167-168), described how a 'school-as-a-whole' process for dialogue, innovation and decision-making was adopted. Positive outcomes were again reported in creating an inclusive school culture and a 'climate of collaboration and inquiry... which was characterised by curriculum integration, instructional support and innovation, and systematic strategies for overall school improvement'.

Billingsley (2007) recognised that an important facet of the teacher leader's role in special education was the induction and mentoring of new teachers. This included the modelling of teaching strategies, coaching, leading professional development and peer support meetings which helped reduce teacher attrition in this group. Billingsley (2007) highlighted the benefits

to mentors in terms of the skills they developed in observing, giving feedback, reflecting on their practice, understanding the needs of new teachers and gaining personal satisfaction from the process. It is also worth noting that, as with DL, it was argued (Hargreaves and Dawe, 1990) that the use of coaching and mentoring could have a darker side. Whilst purporting to build collaborative cultures it could become a form of 'contrived collegiality .... which may be little more than a quick, slick administrative surrogate for genuinely collaborative teacher cultures', (Hargreaves and Dawe, 1990, p.12).

A study in Hong Kong, by Szeto and Cheng (2018) about the development of leadership capacity amongst new teachers, included one special schoolteacher. Szeto and Cheng (2018) found that the role of the principal was critical in developing TL through frequent interaction with teachers. The principal inspired teachers by sharing the vision, empowered them through sharing learning opportunities, and involved them in curriculum focused decision-making. In doing this the principal built a culture of continual learning and developed the confidence and capacity of leaders. Although this study contained only one special schoolteacher its findings mirrored those of School 1 in my research.

Another study from the Netherlands by Smeets and Ponte (2009) on action research and TL included one special school. It found that a culture of teacher engagement in research which was facilitated and monitored by principals, was a pre-condition of teacher led action research. This resonated with research in mainstream schools which will be reviewed in sections 2.2.9.2, 2.2.9.3 and 2.2.9.4. Again, although this study makes limited reference to special education, its findings related to School 1 in my research.

On a different note, York-Barr *et al.* (2005) argued that the work of all special educators equated with TL because of the complexity of their role: providing vision, direction and planning; collaborating and advocating for the benefit of students at multiple levels; managing a range of paraprofessionals and working with non-specialist teachers to create a school culture that was focused on meeting the needs of children with disabilities. This resonated with the role of class teachers in special schools in this research.

Finally, Billingsley (2007) identified barriers to TL in special education in addition to those found in mainstream schools. Workload of special education teachers, particularly around legal compliance to documents such as EHCPs, meant that potential teacher leaders may not have time to take on additional roles. In addition, teacher attrition and lack of trained special education teachers further reduced numbers as existing teachers focused on mentoring new staff.

#### **2.2.8.5 Teacher Leadership through Professional Learning Communities in Special Education**

Billingsley (2007) posited that whilst little is known about the specific contexts for the development of TL in special education, the development of PLCs was linked to TL. Du Four *et al.* (2005) and Roy and Hord (2006) identified four key features of a PLC: collective learning, in which teachers engaged in reflective dialogue about teaching and learning; de-privatization of practice, in which teachers shared knowledge, mentored each other, and provided professional feedback through networks; peer collaboration towards school improvement, such as action research and collective inquiry; shared leadership and principal support.

Schechter and Feldman (2013, p.788) in a study of PLCs in special schools in Israel argued that, 'The challenges of teaching students with disabilities require an ongoing commitment to



collaborative professional learning' for several reasons. Firstly, learning had to be functional, and the curriculum had to be individualised, based on each child's strengths, needs and preferred learning style, to be as independent as possible in adulthood (Sachs, Levin and Weiszkopf, 1992). Secondly, children would be supported by multidisciplinary teams, which required a collaborative approach (Sachs, Levin and Weiszkopf, 1992). In meeting these challenges, Schechter and Feldman (2013, p.789) argued that a school structure that included learning networks, to support joint thinking and learning around pupil welfare, was essential. As in mainstream schools headteachers played a key role in facilitating and nurturing TL through strategies such as identifying and sharing expertise through class observations, lunchtime learning sessions, and using a co-operative professional development framework, for consultation processes, regarding change.

Within England, Carpenter *et al.* (2012 and 2011) argued that schools need to develop as PLCs, becoming centres of inquiry, to meet the needs of increasingly complex pupils with CLLD. In relation to the inspection process Carpenter (2016b, p15) contended that in addition to the three 'i's of issue, intervention and impact, which Ofsted review, two further 'i's should be added for complex learners – inquiry and innovation – making what he called the five 'i's. This approach is endorsed by the SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2015) which requires schools to collaborate with specialist providers such as educational psychologists, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, specialist teachers, therapists and parents.

The SENCO and class teacher, together with the specialists, and involving the pupil's parents, should consider a range of evidence-based and effective team approaches,

appropriate equipment, strategies and interventions in order to support the child's progress, (DfE 2015, 6.62, p.103)

Overall, although the literature is limited, it suggested that the role of TL was recognised as crucial in special education in meeting complex needs.

### **2.2.9 The Role of the Headteacher**

The role of the Headteacher in relation to DL and TL has been alluded to but is worthy of separate consideration as the literature recognised that paradoxically headteachers were almost universally viewed as pivotal in implementing, supporting and sustaining DL and TL (Blasé and Blasé, 1999; Leithwood *et al.*, 2006; Hallinger and Heck, 2009; Harris 2009b). This section will consider the challenges posed by DL and TL for headteachers, the role of the Headteacher in developing leadership in others and creating a supportive environment for the development of DL and TL (Murphy *et al.*, 2009; Ponte and Smeets, 2009; Harris, 2011).

#### **2.2.9.1 Challenges of Distributed Leadership for Headteachers**

A significant body of literature (Copland, 2003; MacBeath, 2009; Murphy *et al.*, 2009; Torrance, 2013) posited that the implementation of DL posed challenges for headteachers - particularly those who have been in post for greater lengths of time (Murphy *et al.*, 2009). Harris (2011, p.8) summarised these changes to the Headteacher's role as:

relinquishing some authority and power and a repositioning of the role from exclusive leadership to a form of leadership that is more concerned with brokering, facilitating, and supporting others in leading innovation and change. It requires a different conception of the organization that moves from bureaucratic to collaborative. It also

means the development of new skills and a new repertoire of approaches to fit the role.

Dilemmas around empowering staff in a policy climate where headteachers are accountable for school performance has already been discussed. Meanwhile, MacBeath (2005) noted that headteachers were challenged with how and what to distribute so that it did not just become delegation. They also needed to know what teachers could do and when to give them more responsibility. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) added to this an understanding of what kind of professional development was required.

Managing DL also presented challenges for headteachers. Barth *et al.* (1999, cited in Harris, 2004) wrote that teachers may be hostile to DL because of added workload or insecurity. Meanwhile, Currie, Lockett and Suhomlinova (2009), in a study of 30 Nottinghamshire schools found that headteachers were often criticised for not distributing, whilst at the same time some staff felt the latter were paid to lead. Storey (2004) found that conflicting priorities, lack of clarity about boundaries and responsibilities, and competing leadership styles could lead to issues within the micro-politics of the school. In these complex situations, Currie, Lockett and Suhomlinova (2009, p.1753) concluded that to maintain the support of all stakeholders, headteachers had to 'negotiate between contradictory institutional pressures' and in the end what they saw emerging was a 'weak' form of DL whereby headteachers 'retain the ultimate responsibility for organizational performance while securing compliance of lower ranks' by ascribing to them some managerial responsibilities.

In concluding this section, Klein *et al.* (2018) underlined the importance of the Headteacher's role in enabling DL. They argued that without this changed role, external accountability

mechanisms, government initiatives, lack of time, confidence and experience, unwillingness to let go, the dominance of hierarchical structures, inadequate Continuing Professional Development (CPD), a lack of a supportive culture and an incongruency between purpose and delivery could become barriers to both DL and TL.

#### 2.2.9.2 Developing Leadership in Others

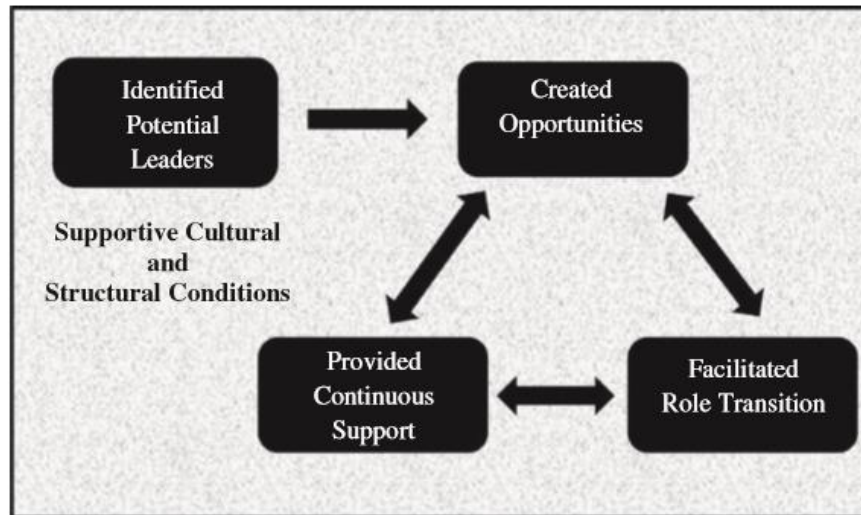
Developing leadership in others was widely viewed in the literature as critical for enabling both DL and TL and was seen by Leithwood *et al.* (2007) as one of the four core leadership practises of successful headteachers. Harris, (2011 p.15) noted that this included: 'creating the conditions for others to lead' and to 'orchestrate the talent and leadership capability of others to move the school forward'.

Klar *et al.* (2016) investigated how 6 US school principals fostered the leadership capacity of 18 other leaders to distribute leadership, secure school improvement and boost students' outcomes. Klar *et al.* (2016, p.115, citing Stoll and Bolam, 2005, p.52) defined the concept of capacity, as 'the motivation, skill, resources, resilience and conditions' needed for ongoing learning. Klar *et al.* (2016) found that actions taken by headteachers were intentional and fell into four phases:

- Identification of potential leaders
- Creating leadership opportunities
- Facilitating role transition
- Providing ongoing support

Klar *et al.* (2016 p.16) argued that the phases were inter-related with ‘the progression of activities occurring in a cyclical rather than a linear process embedded in support structures and cultural conditions’, and related closely to the phases of MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse’s model (2004). This process is summarised in Figure 9.

**Figure 9: Principal’s capacity-building actions used to foster the leadership capacities of formal and informal leaders (Klar *et al.*, 2016 p.129)**



Principals identified leaders in a variety of ways. Sometimes staff requested training and mentoring, although in other instances principals were proactive in getting to know staff skills by observing or talking with them as in Phase 1 of MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse’s (2004) model and Szeto and Cheng’s (2018) research. Once identified, principals matched individual capabilities to the needs of the school. To build confidence and support their development, principals adapted structures systematically, as described by Murphy *et al.* (2009).

In facilitating transition into their new roles, principals typically observed, modelled, or shared experiences to create a supportive culture. This often focused on emotional aspects, as new

leaders renegotiated relationships with colleagues, as in Phase 2 of MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse's model (2004). In all of this, relational trust, as recognised in the literature, (Murphy et al., 2009; Day *et al.*, 2011) was important between principals and new leaders. Finally, new leaders were given a freer rein, whilst still being able to access support as needed. With the establishment of trust in this phase, leadership became interdependent (Lambert, 2003), with principals and new leaders able to question and support each other's mutual development. Klar *et al.* (2016) concluded that the process by which principals brought on new leaders was in line with other research, in that it was neither natural, straightforward nor context free (Torrance, 2013), and often required the intervention of principals (Leithwood *et al.*, 2007). Principals were also mindful of their own accountability and potentially limited leadership roles to staff who they could trust to perform well, having both the willingness and capacity to lead (Klar *et al.*, 2016). Additionally, principals carefully assessed the school context in making decisions (Day *et al.*, 2011, cited in Klar *et al.*, 2016).





Regarding TL, Smylie and Eckert (2017) argued that without leadership development TL was unlikely to develop. Fullan (2007, p. 153, cited in Poekert, Alexandrou and Shannon, 2016, p.308) contended that 'professional learning in context is the only learning that ultimately counts for changing classrooms.' Similarly, Smylie and Eckert (2017) argued that the workplace should be at the centre of the process of leadership development, which they contrasted with training, with its focus on skills and knowledge. A wide body of literature (Harris and Lambert, 2003; Muijs and Harris, 2006; Wenner and Campbell, 2017) identified that experience of collective leadership roles such as leading groups, workshops, mentoring, staff training, peer tutoring, research and writing bids, which provided opportunities to reflect and receive feedback, and focused on leadership as well as the individual, was particularly effective.

Of relevance to School 1 in this research, Klein *et al.* (2018) explored the role of external support from university mentors in a multi-year project supporting emergent TL in a group of K-12 science teachers. They found that the support from the university mentors gave teachers the confidence to try out new ideas and take risks, whilst the formal university framework of professional development validated teachers and provided networking opportunities.

### 2.2.9.3 Developing Structures and Routines

Leithwood (2006) contended that headteachers needed to be assertive in developing new structures which created a deeper pool of leadership for DL to flourish. This was supported by Murphy *et al.* (2009). Harris (2009a, p.259) stated that structures needed to be ‘fluid and organic’ and developed a model of distribution, shown in Figure 10.

**Figure 10: Model of distributed leadership practice (Harris, 2009a, p.259)**

loosely - Coupled System    Tightly- Coupled system	<i>Ad hoc</i> distribution	Autonomous distribution
	Flexible structure but unco-ordinated practice	Flexible structure and deep co-ordinated practice
	Autocratic distribution	Additive distribution
	Rigid structure and random practice	Rigid structure with limited but co-ordinated forms of practice
	Diffusely distributed leadership   Deeply distributed leadership	

Harris’ (2009a) model focused on structural alignment, composition and patterns of distribution. She used Weick’s (1976, cited in Harris, 2009a) concept of loose coupling and

plotted, tight versus loose coupling, and diffuse (unco-ordinated) versus deep (co-ordinated), forms of leadership distribution and viewed the flexible, loose and lateral structure of autonomous distribution of leadership as being suited to innovation and change.

Regarding TL, a body of literature (Harris and Lambert, 2003; Muijs and Harris, 2006; Wenner and Campbell, 2017) argued that supportive routines and time needed to be put in place for meetings, planning, visiting classrooms, discussion and collaborative processes. Muijs and Harris (2006) stated that structured working groups facilitated high levels of involvement, which promoted self-confidence, openness to change, collaborative problem solving, knowledge generation, sharing of practice and involvement in the creation of a shared vision.

A further structural element supporting TL was the need for the explicit articulation of TL roles (Wenner and Campbell, 2017) and clear hierarchies (Muijs and Harris, 2006), which were found by Klein *et al.* (2018) to be important in giving teachers confidence to lead, without fear of encroaching on another's area of responsibility. Similarly, Hirsh and Segolsson (2019, p.404) in a Swedish study, found that the clarification of the role of Middle Leaders, who they defined as, 'those who have an acknowledged position of leadership in their educational institution, but also have a significant teaching role', increased their acceptance by colleagues, thus avoiding resistance from teachers, which Fairman and MacKenzie (2015) suggested could be a potential barrier.

#### **2.2.9.4 Developing a Supportive Culture**

Brundrett and Rhodes (2014) noted that structuring without cultural change was likely to have limited impact. However, the relationship was not simple, and Murphy *et al.* (2009) showed how new structures could support re-culturing through encouraging teams, provision of



planning time to develop communities of practice, in-house training led by teachers, using school goals to identify leadership opportunities, and linking these to capable individuals.

In forming cultures, the Headteacher had an important role. Indeed Schein (1985, p.2, cited in Stoll and Fink, 1996, p.82) suggested 'the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture.' Murphy *et al.* (2009) perceived the role of the headteacher as removing barriers such as teacher autonomy, privacy, and civility, whilst Fullan (2001, p.44) advocated the importance of 're-culturing', through developing collaborative work cultures.

In relation to TL, Muijs and Harris (2006) defined supportive cultures as being characterised by positive relationships based on trust, both between staff and between staff and Senior Leaders. Teachers, for their part, trust that SMT were not exploiting their goodwill in undertaking unpaid activities, whilst recognising their work in other ways. This kind of culture encouraged teachers to lead on initiatives and encouraged internal promotions. Muijs and Harris (2006) also identified the importance of a commitment to collaborative inquiry, focused on using data and action research.

#### **2.2.10 Criticisms of Distributed Leadership**

Much of the literature so far reviewed has viewed DL and TL through a positive lens. However, some studies have presented an alternative perspective of DL, raising questions about its theoretical background, depicting it as a political phenomenon, and questioning how far power was redistributed. These issues will be considered in the following section.

### 2.2.10.1 Criticisms of Theoretical Underpinning

Hartley (2009) criticised the theoretical underpinning of Spillane's (2006) model. Hartley (2009) argued that whilst adhering to the socio-cultural approach, which only regarded activity as having ontological status, Spillane's (2006) research assigned ontological status to individual agents through his leader-plus aspect, and the separate leader and follower roles in his practice aspect. Although Spillane (2006) referred to Engestrom's (1999) socio-cultural activity theory, Spillane (2006) diverged from him in significant ways. Spillane (2006) was less object-focused, his model had fewer 'nodes', the roles of followers and leaders were prespecified and there was an absence of any consideration of contradiction, which Engestrom (1999) used as the basis of development work. Hartley (2009, p.146) also argued that Spillane, Halverson and Diamond's (2004) adherence to socio-cultural theory, in which activity systems existed within organisations, did not reflect the fact that 'agents were influenced by their own psychology, and their positions within the wider and enduring macro social structure'.

### 2.2.10.2 A Political Phenomenon

MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse, (2004, p.10) viewed NCSL as largely responsible for the prominence of DL in England, and 'set it as an essential principle in its school leadership development literature'. Hartley (2007, p.205) suggested that this was a political manoeuvre on the part of NCSL, which he described as a 'quango', and argued, citing Grace (2000, p.236) that it was the 'new hegemony in the formation of school leaders' and stifled 'democratic and empirical critique'.

Other studies claimed that DL had been captured by managerialism (Wright, 2003), and manipulated (Harris, 2014), to become a more attractive way of delivering top-down policies. Hatcher (2005, p.259) argued that such an approach 'idealises managerialist practice as a democratic disguise for the reality of the ultimately coercive power of management' and was used by many headteachers to mediate and mitigate the impact of government policies. Thus, Hargreaves and Fink (2008, p.238), supported by Hartley (2007), claimed that DL had been 'largely placed at the service of meeting externally set performance targets that were still decreed non-democratically, and in a way, that is politically arbitrary and professionally exclusive'. Additionally, Fitzgerald and Gunter (2006) viewed DL as a way of reinforcing standardisation practices and getting teachers to do more work. Thus, it was teachers, not strategy, which were available for distribution. Hartley (2007) further concurred with Woods (2004) that DL did not incorporate democratic procedures as leaders were appointed.

### **2.2.10.3 Issues of Power and Authority**

A key area of contention in the literature, was the relationship between DL, power and authority. As noted, Harris (2003a) argued that DL implied a redistribution of power in which schools operated democratically. However, other writers argued that power was under-theorised (Hatcher, 2005; Hartley, 2009), endorsed the maintenance of administrative power (Lumby 2013), and sustained inequalities (Lumby, 2019).

Hatcher (2005) argued that Gronn's (2000) theory of power, based on activity theory, was mistaken on both theoretical and empirical grounds. Whilst Gronn (2000) argued that power and leadership were able to operate independently, Hatcher (2005, p.256) contended that authority, which he equated with power, was always 'delegated, licenced, exercised on behalf

of and revocable by authority, the Headteacher'. Moreover, the power of the Headteacher could not be understood if the unit of analysis was the school, as the Headteacher's power came from the state, which was outside the activity system. Hatcher (2005, p.261) also argued that,

There is an inevitable contradiction in schools between 'authority' and 'influence', between the benefits claimed for DL and the constraints imposed by hierarchical management, with the Headteacher at the top. An authentically participative professional culture could not be achieved within existing government driven management structures.

Lumby (2013, p.592) identified further concerns around power and argued that 'In its avoidance of issues of power, DL is a profoundly political phenomenon replete with uses and abuses of power'. Lumby (2019, p.7) identified power, based on Giddens' definition (1984, p.257), as 'the capacity to achieve outcomes.' She viewed DL as typifying, what she called 3D power, whereby individuals shared the same values and would unconsciously act in ways that benefitted others in the group. Lumby argued that, far from empowering teachers, DL 'reconciled staff to growing workload and accountability and writes the troubling issues of disempowerment and exclusion of staff out of the leadership script' (2013, p.582). She argued, similarly to Hatcher (2005), that DL had been used to create 'a mirage, an apolitical workplace,' in which 'DL potentially enables all to participate in leadership on a basis of capacity alone' (2013, p.582). In this 'fantasy world' (2013, p.584), DL remained silent on issues 'about gender race and other characteristics that may prevent inclusion in leadership, and may be actively perpetrating inequality', (2013, p.591).

More recently Lumby (2019) argued that whilst some writers saw DL as dismantling ‘the tyranny of bureaucracy’, (Fitzgerald, 2009, p.51, cited in Lumby, 2019, p.6) DL often continued to exist within bureaucratic frameworks in which power relations remained undistributed. However, Lumby (2019, p.10) argued that bureaucracy had had a bad press and contended that unlike DL, the theorisation of power was at the heart of bureaucracy: ‘Indeed, its basis is to shape power productively and control it within ethical parameters.’

Another conceptualisation of power within DL was offered by Woods (2016, p.155) who developed the concept of social authority which was in ‘perpetual construction.’ Woods focused his concept of power around co-ordination, which allowed power to be understood in different ways: as top-down power, which Woods (2016, p.155) described as ‘power over’; or as ‘power with’ (Woods, 2016, p.155) which was shared through co-operation. Woods (2016, p.155) contended that social authority was constructed from ‘the interplay of multiple negotiated and contending ‘tributary authorities’ arising from interaction of groups and individuals.’ Woods (2016, pp.156-157) identified five tributary authorities, the balance of which would be different for each setting:

- Rational authority: typified by hierarchy, based on expertise, and may include communal authority.
- Communal authority: embedded in social relationships and may include shared values and norms.
- Exchange authority: focused on governance through associative, and co-operative networks.
- Democratic authority: decisions were legitimated through discussion and consent.

- Interior authority: grounded in one person.

By considering the balance of authorities, light was thrown on how DL operated in different settings. This model also recognised that authority was not always shared equally, even whilst aspiring to inclusivity. Additionally, it provided a critical lens to analyse the concept of power.

Day *et al.* (2007) distinguished between degrees of power and authority, identifying two different patterns: decisional distribution and consultative distribution. In decisional distribution, teachers were given a high degree of autonomy and full responsibility in their designated area. By contrast, in consultative distribution advice and information were asked of teachers, in relation to whole school issues as part of a decision-making process, whilst final authority rested with formal leaders. They found however, that the nature and pattern of leadership was determined by principals and identified three determining influences. Firstly, the principal's personal understanding of leadership, including the need for control; secondly, the stage at which principals were in their leadership careers; and thirdly, the principal's understanding of each member of staff's readiness for leadership (Day *et al.*, 2007, cited in Harris, 2009a, p.256).

## **2.3 Distributed Leadership, Change and School Improvement**

### **2.3.1 Leadership in Special Schools in a Changing Educational Environment.**

In recognition of the significant changes in the last forty years within the SEND landscape, the DfE report *Leadership of Special Schools: Issues and Challenges* (DfE, 2013, p.27), described leadership in special schools as 'a field characterised by change and diversity'. This section explores some of the changes, issues, and challenges specific to leadership in special schools in the past two decades.

In the 2000s special schools were tasked with developing support systems for pupils in mainstream schools or face potential closure, whilst continuing to provide high quality leadership, in existing circumstances. This made them particularly vulnerable (Rayner *et al.*, 2005). In facing these changes Ainscow, Fox and Coupe O’Kane (2003) stressed the importance of collaboration, team building and partnerships, and observed that the Headteacher should be a leader of leaders, building organisational cultures which encouraged experimentation and collective problem solving. This resonated closely with the discussion of DL above.

Pupils’ needs have also become more complex, with an increase of students with autism, challenging behaviour and mental disorders (Baker, 2009). In the wake of the Lamb Inquiry (DCFS, 2009a), SSAT was commissioned to research ways of improving outcomes for young people. Its final report (Carpenter *et al.*, 2011) recognised the emergence of a new and growing generation of students with CLDD. The outcome of this for schools was that tried and tested approaches were no longer effective in engaging these students (Champion, 2005). Male and Rayner (2007) identified difficulties for special school headteachers, linked to the increasing complexity of incoming pupils, which included inadequate initial teacher training and succession planning, with the National College encouraging headteachers to develop ‘grow your own’ strategies, (DfE, 2013, p.23). This resonated with processes at work in other specialist sectors, such as Early Childhood (EC) services where Aubrey, Godfrey and Harris, (2013, p.26) in a study of 12 settings in the Midlands found that,

There was an observed need for EC leaders to develop and ‘bring staff on’, that is to ‘distribute’ leadership through the setting to meet the challenge of recruiting and training a workforce fit for future EC services.

The Children's and Families Act (2014) also provided challenges, particularly through the need to convert statements of SEN to Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs), as part of a single assessment process. Interagency working had always been part of special school practice, however, given that many of these services were undergoing major change, the challenge in maintaining partnerships was not insignificant (DfE, 2013).

Finally, the challenges of performativity in special schools increased following the Lamb Inquiry (DCSF, 2009a, p.2) which reported that 'educational achievement for children with SEN/D is too low and the gap with their peers too wide' The same year saw the introduction of Progression Guidance (DCSF, 2009b) for pupils working below National Curriculum Level 1, which saw inspections focus more closely on expected progress against data sets gathered from students with widely differing needs. Finally, following the Rochford Report (STA, 2016), special schools were given more freedom in how they assessed and measured progress. This was one focus of change in my research schools.

### **2.3.2 Distributed Leadership and School Improvement**

Hopkins (2001, p.13) described school improvement as 'a distinct approach to educational change that aims to enhance students' outcomes, *as well as* strengthening the school's capacity for managing change. It is concerned with raising student achievement through focussing on the teaching-learning process and the conditions that support it'. Stoll and Fink (1994) noted that school improvement was closely related to school effectiveness. Stoll (1994) saw the key difference being that whilst school effectiveness was concerned with developing the criteria that characterise an effective school, which is sometimes simplified to results, school improvement was more developmentally orientated and focused on process.



There was widespread agreement in the literature about the importance of leadership in facilitating school improvement (Wallace, 2002; Hallinger and Heck, 2009; Brundrett and Rhodes, 2014). Hallinger and Heck (2009, p.103) acknowledged: 'Sustained school improvement in the absence of evidence of leadership is a rarity'. However, there were differing views about the relationship between DL and school improvement, which could be explained by the scarcity of empirical data (Harris *et al.*, 2007; Leithwood *et al.*, 2007; Hallinger and Heck, 2009; Robinson, 2009). However, DL's advocates, typified by Harris (2014), argued that it allowed leaders to make fuller use of individual capacities outside formal leadership roles, to engage a wider range of staff, and to increase opportunities for leadership development. Thus, it was suggested that DL was a potential contributor to positive change and transformation in school systems (Hargreaves and Fink 2006 cited in Harris *et al.*, 2007; Spillane, 2006; Blasé and Blasé, 1999).

Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon, (2001, p.49, cited in Harris, 2007, pp.319-320) included 'varied sources of leadership, including DL' at the top of the list of characteristics of the 'improving school', whilst Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins. (2008, p.34), claimed that 'School leadership has a greater influence on schools and pupils when it is widely distributed'. Similarly, Fullan (2001, p.134) suggested that 'strong institutions have many leaders at all levels.' The Annenberg DL Project (Supovitz and Riggan, 2012) developed DL in a group of Philadelphia Schools to improve teaching and learning and found it to be an effective way of embedding change more deeply (Supovitz and Riggan, 2012). In relation to TL, Muijs and Harris (2006, p.965) viewed it as essential to school improvement, as 'it was seen to harness teacher creativity and devolve work and responsibility from the head'. By contrast Mayrowetz (2008, p.424, cited in Bolden, 2011, p.259) commented that 'there is no strong link between

distributed leadership and the two primary goals of educational leadership: school improvement and leadership development’.

In explaining these inconsistencies Harris (2013, p.552) commented that ‘It [DL] is not a panacea for success. It does not possess any innate good or bad qualities. It is not a friend or foe. Much depends on the nature of distributed practice and the intentions behind it’. Similarly, Leithwood *et al.* (2007) argued that positive consequences cannot simply be assumed, rather it was the pattern of distribution that was critical. Consequences were often indirect or mediated (Muijs and Harris, 2003; Hallinger and Heck, 2009) in that the processes at work within DL provided the ‘organisational circuitry’ (Harris, 2009b, p.253) or were ‘the glue of a common task or goal – improvement of instruction – and a common frame of values for how to approach that task’, (Elmore, 2000 p.15) for strategies widely linked with successful schools such as positive cultures, collaborative practice, capacity building, knowledge creation and the development of PLCs. These issues and their links with DL, including TL, will be explored in the following sections.

### **2.3.3 Collaborative Practice**

Links between collaborative work cultures, school improvement and positive responses to change were widely referenced in the literature (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992; York-Barr and Duke, 2004; Fullan, 2007; Harris, 2014), although Liljenberg (2015, cited in Hirsh and Segolsson, 2019) cautioned that collaborative structures were no guarantee of positive outcomes in terms of development and learning.

Rosenholtz’s study (1989, cited in Telford, 1996) contrasted ‘stuck’ (learning impoverished) schools, which were not supportive of change and improvement, and were characterised by

isolation and uncertainty amongst teachers, which correlated negatively with student learning gains, with 'moving' schools (learning enriched), which were characterised by effective teams and collaborative practice. Rosenholtz (1989, cited in Telford, 1996) also described these schools as 'high consensus' schools which had a strong sense of community. Rosenholtz (1989, cited in Telford, 2006) noted that these schools were also characterised by continuous improvement and career-long teacher learning; teachers felt empowered and were not dependent upon external change for direction. Telford (1996) argued that it was this collaborative environment that made it possible for all staff to work together as a team, with a common goal, and be collectively responsible for its attainment.

Harris and Lambert (2003) built on this framework and posited that: 'Collaboration is at the heart of TL, as it is premised on change that is undertaken collectively', (2003, p.44). Such was its importance that Lambert (1998, p.5) described the nature and purpose of leadership as 'the ability of those within a school to work together, constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively'. She called this Constructivist leadership. Central to this concept was learning, reflection and inquiry (Harris and Muijs, 2003) through which teachers engaged in reciprocal critical analysis of teaching which led to self-directed improvement of practice. This encouraged risk taking, allowed teachers to look at different approaches to learning, share and implement new ideas, knowledge, and expertise, and to give and receive feedback within supportive, collaborative relationships which built (Harris and Muijs, 2003, p.61) 'a collective professional confidence what allows teachers to interact more confidently and assertively.'

The role of collaborative research was also highlighted by Poekert, Alexandrou and Shannon (2016, p.318), who described it as ‘developing a systematic and iterative approach’ which empowered teachers to see the significance of day-to-day actions in their classrooms. In considering its impact Poekert, Alexandrou and Shannon (2016, p.319) wrote: ‘Teachers described the powerful validation found in sharing research aligned to their beliefs and the confidence that comes from feeling empowered .... this motivated them to continue their work and to build capacity for strong instruction among their peers.’

#### **2.3.4 Professional Learning Communities**

Hargreaves (2002, p.3, cited in Muijs and Harris, 2006, p.971) suggested that PLCs

lead to strong and measurable improvements in students learning. Instead of bringing about ‘quick fixes’ or superficial change, they create and support sustainable improvements that last over time because they build professional skill and the capacity to keep the school progressing.

Harris and Lambert (2003) and Harris (2005) highlighted close links between PLCs and DL, and Harris (2014) explained how PLCs developed, supported, and enhanced DL, as they lead to increased teacher involvement, ownership, innovation and leadership. Harris (2014, p.96) recognised PLCs existing at both whole school level, where they were synonymous with ‘learning organizations’ and locally, as teams or collaborative groups that were charged with improving learning for a group of learners. She viewed the work of PLCs as being a form of disciplined collaboration, focused on inquiry, within a cycle which began with the setting up of a group, which moved on to identifying a focus through data scrutiny, action inquiry, innovation and change, trial, and feedback, refining and sharing outcomes, before moving on

to a new focus. School leaders had a critical role in enabling PLCs to work through the creation of time, opportunities, and resources.

Copland (2003, p.376) saw a similar process at work in a study of 86 American schools in a collaborative reform project which aimed to 're-culture' schools in ways that supported change. The project was based on three tenets: improving schools required a change of culture; leadership and improvement was rooted in a cycle of continual inquiry; decisions about problems and development of solutions should be made collectively and focus on improving student learning. Three important organisational preconditions were implied: firstly, the development of a culture that embodied collaboration, trust, professional learning, and reciprocal accountability; secondly, a need for strong consensus regarding problems facing the school and thirdly, for rich expertise with approaches to improving teaching and learning among all employees. Copland (2003) found that schools passed through novice, intermediate and advanced stages of development. He also found that formal leaders played a key role which changed as the new culture became more embedded: they had to give up ego and power, but still played a key strategic role. Copland (2003, p.394) argued that the inquiry process could be seen to enable DL and provided the 'glue' that bound the school together in common work.

### 2.3.5 Trust

Trust was identified in Section 2.2 as central to the development of DL (Lambert, 2003; Macbeath, 2005; Muijs and Harris, 2006; Ritchie and Woods, 2007; Murphy *et al.*, 2009). Covey and Merrill (2008, cited in Harris, 2014, p. 84) summarised the importance of trust in relation to school improvement in the simple equation: 'trust = organizational improvement.'

In unpicking this relationship Harris (2014) argued that trust was linked with open communication, distributed collaborative leadership, collective working, interdependent learning, constant reinvention, innovation, new ideas, being future orientated, collective capacity and, as such, underpinned high performing organisations. By contrast low performing organisations were characterised by mistrust, closed communication, secrecy, closed attitudes, autocratic leadership, individual working, dependent learning, conformity, repetition, recycling of old ideas, a preoccupation with the past and complacency. The importance of trust in improved performance was also posited by Bryk and Schneider (2002, cited in Harris, 2014). They contended that relational trust facilitated innovation in the classroom and supported commitment to the organisation and its values.

### **2.3.6 Social Capital**

Linked to trust, Spillane (2015) and Harris (2014) considered the role of social capital, which underpinned collaborative practice in school improvement. Social capital was defined by Cohen and Prusak, (2001, cited in Harris, 2014, p.78) as ‘the connection between people, the trust, mutual understanding and shared values, and behaviour that bind members of human networks and communities together and make co-operative action possible’. Spillane (2015) argued that there were often untapped resources within these relationships which impacted on teacher effectiveness and student achievement. Harris (2014) noted that DL in partnership with disciplined collaboration, generated social capital, although Spillane (2015) argued that there remained a lot to be learnt about how to generate and strengthen it.

The importance of relationships in school improvement was brought to the fore in the literature around TL (Harris and Lambert, 2003; Fairman and MacKenzie, 2015; Poekert,

Alexandrou and Shannon, 2016; and Klein *et al.*, 2018). Poekert, Alexandrou and Shannon (2016) noted that relationships enabled teacher leaders to advocate and step out of their comfort zone. Whilst Fairman and MacKenzie (2015) found that relationships underpinned the way in which teacher leaders influenced each other. Fairman and MacKenzie (2015, p.70) observed that teachers,

employed different strategies (sharing, modelling, coaching, collaborating, and learning together, and advocating), professional dispositions and behaviours (e.g., honesty and openness, reflection, respect, communication, encouragement, prodding and support) and supportive conditions (e.g., trust, safety, time/scheduling and support from administrators) to establish and deepen their professional working relationships within various spheres of leadership activity.

These relationships were complex and varied and took place between individuals, in teams and across the wider school community. Relationships were reciprocal and served to build a collegial climate through which teachers felt safe to be open to critique and support each other and accept change. In this process teacher leaders also developed skills of negotiation, decision-making and collaboration and through supporting the leadership of peers developed the capacity of the whole school to improve (Fairman and MacKenzie, 2015). Harris and Lambert (2003, p.15) stated: 'A school culture that promotes collegiality, trust, collaborative working relationships and that focuses on teacher and learning is more likely to be self-renewing and responsive to improvement efforts.'

### 2.3.7 Capacity Building

Harris (2014) claimed that DL was likely to contribute to school improvement through building the internal capacity for development. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) supported this view, arguing that teacher leaders could help other teachers to understand and accept changes needed to support improvement. Indeed Fullan (2010a, p. 72) saw it as fundamental to the rationale for DL:

The power of capacity is that it enables ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things. .... The collective motivational well seems bottomless. The speed of effective change increases exponentially. Collective capacity quite simply gets more, and deeper things done in shorter periods.

In the literature concerned with TL, Poekert, Alexandrou and Shannon (2016) identified capacity building as one of the three targets of TL. Poekert, Alexandrou and Shannon's (2016) model outlined four areas of growth: personal growth, growth as a teacher, growth as a researcher and growth as a leader. They argued that with support, CPD and opportunities to engage and make a difference, teachers could build leadership skills that could be transferred to different situations. As such they saw teacher leaders as agents of change.

Supporting this position Harris and Lambert (2003, p.24) viewed TL to be at the heart of capacity building, which they defined as 'broad based, skilful involvement in the work of leadership'. It was broad based because it involved a wide range of people, such as headteachers, teachers, parents, pupils and community members in leading. It was also skilful because teachers had 'a comprehensive understanding and demonstrated proficiency .... of leadership dispositions, knowledge and skills', (2003, p.24). Harris and Lambert (2003) argued



that it was a duty, to participate in leadership activities, as without this individuals or groups would fall behind in their learning, which would impact negatively on leadership capacity and school improvement. Harris and Lambert’s (2003) leadership capacity model, which is shown in Figure 11, plotted the relationship between these two elements, to identify four levels of leadership capacity which reflected four different cultures. The descriptor in each quadrant focused on seven areas - the role of leaders, the flow of information, defined teacher roles, relationships among teachers, norms, innovation in teaching and learning and pupil achievement.

**Figure 11: Leadership capacity matrix (Harris and Lambert, 2003, p.25)**

Level of involvement	
<p><b>LOW INVOLVEMENT</b>  <b>Quadrant 1 - Stuck School</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head is autocratic.</li> <li>• Co-dependent relationships.</li> <li>• Norms of compliance.</li> <li>• Lack of innovation.</li> <li>• Pupil achievement is poor.</li> </ul> <p><b>LOW SKILLS</b></p>	<p><b>HIGH INVOLVEMENT</b>  <b>Quadrant 2 - Fragmented School.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head is <i>laissez faire</i>.</li> <li>• Undefined roles and responsibilities.</li> <li>• Norms of individualism.</li> <li>• Erratic innovation.</li> <li>• Pupil achievement static overall. (Unless data are disaggregated).</li> </ul> <p><b>LOW SKILLS</b></p>
<p><b>LOW INVOLVEMENT</b>  <b>Quadrant 3 - Moving School.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head and key teachers as purposeful leadership team.</li> <li>• Polarised staff -pockets of resistance.</li> <li>• Norms of reflection and teaching excellence.</li> <li>• Effective innovation.</li> <li>• Pupil achievement shows slight improvement.</li> </ul> <p><b>HIGH SKILLS</b></p>	<p><b>HIGH INVOLVEMENT</b>  <b>Quadrant 4 - Improving School.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head, teachers, as well as pupils are skilful leaders.</li> <li>• Shared vision.</li> <li>• Norms of collaboration and collective responsibility.</li> <li>• Reflective practice consistently leads to innovation.</li> <li>• Pupil achievement is high or improving steadily.</li> </ul> <p><b>HIGH SKILLS</b></p>

### 2.3.8 Knowledge Creation

Harris (2009a) viewed DL as providing the framework for the creation of knowledge and generation of innovation. Fullan (2007) underlined the importance of this, arguing that schools

needed a system that would support the transformation of instruction for students. From a study of four schools, Harris (2009a, p.264) concluded that knowledge creation needed a 'knowledge space' which allowed for professional interaction at multiple levels, composed of collaborative teams, characterised by interdependence, networking and adaptability within an organisation where leadership was flexible, responsive, and able to realign to changing environments and needs. Through this, tacit knowledge could be made explicit, and knowledge could move from individual level, to group, to organisations and between organisations. She argued that for this to happen schools needed to have leadership structures that were highly flexible, and that DL could provide this mechanism.

### **2.3.9 Patterns of Distribution**

Leithwood *et al.* (2007, p.40) suggested that organisational 'productivity' could be linked to patterns of leadership distribution. Leithwood *et al.*'s model (2007) focused on how DL was institutionalised and was discussed in section 2.2.7. Leithwood *et al.* (2007) contended that co-ordination was crucial and that planful alignment had the greatest potential for long term positive change. Harris (2009a) made similar claims for the importance of patterns of distribution, claiming that flexible, loose, and lateral structures of autonomous distribution of leadership, as shown in Figure 10, were more suited to innovation and change.

### **2.3.10 Teacher Leadership and School Improvement**

Wenner and Campbell (2017) in their literature review identified a range of outcomes of TL. Most outcomes were positive: teacher leaders mostly described increased confidence, a sense of empowerment and work satisfaction, whilst individual teachers described professional growth, improved teaching, the desire to continue to improve and take on more leadership

challenges. As well as the impact on individual teachers, Wenner and Campbell (2017, p.152) identified positive outcomes for colleagues of teacher leaders, commenting that, 'we found that teachers taking on leadership roles resulted in feelings of empowerment for all teachers in a school, colleagues receiving support that is relevant and encourages professional growth, and TL contributing significantly to school change.'

In terms of negative outcomes for teacher leaders, Wenner and Campbell (2017) noted that 9% of the articles reviewed described increased workload and stress caused by the need to balance class teaching with leadership responsibilities, whilst 15% reported difficulties in relationships with peers, where teacher leaders were seen to have increased power, which was incongruent with egalitarian norms.

### **2.3.11 Motivation and Teacher Retention**

One outcome that warrants individual discussion in the context of this research is teacher attrition and retention in relation to TL and DL. The literature identified teacher attrition, as being a significant issue amongst teachers, with Ingersoll and Perda (2012) finding that 40-50% of teachers left the profession within the first 5 years of their career. Wenner and Campbell (2017) cited Donaldson (2007), and Johnson and Donaldson (2004), who suggested the lack of new challenges as their careers developed, may be a key cause of attrition, amongst teachers who wished to stay in the classroom. In the light of this Wenner and Campbell (2017) posited that TL may be a possible solution. Similarly, Muijs and Harris (2006), in a case study of 10 schools, found increased retention, where teachers were empowered through a culture of TL and collaboration. They found that teachers' morale and self-efficacy improved, and they

were motivated through a feeling of ownership, engendered by involvement in school development work, which also led to school improvement.

Within special education the issue of teacher retention was similar. In a literature review of teacher attrition in special education from 1993-2002 Billingsley (2004) found that many of the issues which led to teachers either leaving the profession or moving to general education related to an absence of characteristics associated with TL. Billingsley (2004) found that teacher retention centred around four themes: (1) teacher characteristics and personal factors, (2) teacher qualifications, (3) work environment factors and (4) affective reactions to work factors. Whitaker (2000, cited in Billingsley, 2004) found that support through professional development, induction, and mentoring, especially for new teachers, was critical in reducing attrition particularly in view of the added complexity of special educators' roles such as managing paperwork, developing and monitoring Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and collaborating with other professionals and paraprofessionals. Teacher qualifications received less attention. However, work environments were seen as important to teachers' job satisfaction and career decisions. Within this area school climate and administrative support, including emotional support, were significant. Singh and Billingsley (1998, cited in Billingsley, 2004) found that principals fostered teacher retention by developing collegial cultures and learning communities. Miller, Brownell, and Smith (1999, cited by Billingsley, 2004), observed that higher levels of peer support were linked to retention, whilst lower levels were linked with attrition. However, Gersten *et al.* (2001, p.563, cited in Billingsley, 2004, p.46) saw reciprocity of support amongst all stakeholders as being most significant in its 'cumulative impact'. Within the broader literature, Muijs and Harris (2003) also contended that collaborative practice helped to reduce teacher alienation.

### 2.3.12 Student Outcomes

The discussion above explored how processes at work within DL have been argued, to support strategies (Harris, 2009b) linked with successful schools. However, others (Hartley, 2007; Torrance, 2013) contended more assertively that DL lacked an evidence base which linked it to pupil outcomes. Similarly, Wenner and Campbell (2017) in their review of the literature around TL, found no evidence regarding the impact of TL on pupil outcomes. Hallinger and Heck (1996) shed some light on the difficulties of making such a claim, because of the multidimensional layers of influence on student learning. Nevertheless, a small number of studies have tried to establish this link.

In a research project involving 2570 teachers in 90 schools, Leithwood and Mascall (2008) tried to estimate the impact of collective leadership, which they defined as the democratic distribution of control and influence of teachers and administrators, on student outcomes, mediated by three aspects of teacher performance: motivation, capacity, and work setting. They measured student achievement through an average of standardised tests carried out over three years. Leithwood and Mascall (2008, p. 554) found that ‘the influence of collective leadership was most strongly linked to student achievement through teacher motivation’. Positive links were also found through teachers’ work setting, which was measured by support for instruction and teacher workload. A further study by Leithwood, Patten and Jantzi (2010) explored the relationship between student performance and collective leadership in Maths and Reading in 199 Canadian schools. The results again showed an impact of leadership on student outcomes mediated by rational factors such as knowledge and skills and emotional factors such as learning conditions and family.

Heck and Hallinger (2009, p.659) examined the effects of DL on student achievement in Maths in 195 elementary schools, in a 4-year longitudinal study. They 'found significant direct effect of DL on change in the school's academic capacity and indirect effects on student growth rates in Maths.' Thus, where there was a high perception of DL, schools were better able to improve academic capacity. Conversely, stronger academic capacity appeared to support strong leadership development. Secondly, these changes were linked with school growth rates in Maths. Thirdly, student perceptions of the quality of school socio-curricular organisation were linked to teacher perceptions of DL and academic capacity. Finally, headteacher stability had a positive effect on teacher perceptions of change in DL.

Robinson (2009, p.238) however, argued that, for a proven link between DL and student outcomes, leadership indicators would need to be focused on the practices that teaching and learning research suggested were most likely to impact on student outcomes, and concluded: 'Without concepts and indicators of distributed leadership that are infused with such educational content we will learn more about who does what and very little about the difference it makes to the achievement and well-being of students.' This view was supported by Hallinger and Heck (1996). Similarly, within special education, Boscardin (2007, p.191), based on research in the USA, argued that to forge links between leadership and improved pupil outcomes, leaders would need to adopt 'responsive leadership interventions' founded on the use of proven practice. Boscardin (2007) posited that leadership models have emphasised process over outcomes and contended that the challenge was to identify those variables that were influenced by leaders and which in turn, impacted on students.

## 2.4 Summary

This chapter aimed to review the literature around DL in the context of change and school improvement, with a particular focus on special schools, and by so doing, address research question 1, namely, ‘What is meant by distributed leadership, school improvement and change in the context of school leadership, with a particular focus on special schools?’ Figure 12 (p.76) summarises the key findings presented in this chapter.

In considering what is meant by DL the broader literature indicated that a single shared definition of DL did not exist. DL had much in common with dispersed, collaborative, shared and democratic leadership whereby leadership was no longer the preserve of an individual, but rather ‘a group activity that works through and within relationships’ (Bennett *et al.*, 2003, p.3). Spillane (2006), however, contended that what set DL apart from other forms of shared leadership was its use as an analytical tool and the centrality of the situation within it. Definitions of TL were equally broad, but the connection with DL was clear, and was viewed by Muijs and Harris (2003) as DL in action. Nevertheless, the role of the Headteacher was recognised as central to providing the conditions that enable DL and TL through developing leadership in others, establishing structures and routines, and developing a supportive culture. A broad section of writers indicated that empowerment, trust, collaboration, and positive relationships were at the heart of these cultures. Additionally, some studies identified inherent risks for headteachers who were accountable for their school’s performance, whilst empowering others to lead. In exploring the diverse nature of DL, the literature review discussed several models of distribution. These were used as conceptual frameworks, against which to analyse my findings.

**Figure 12: Summary of findings to Research Question 1**

<b>DEFINITIONS</b>			
<b><i>Distributed Leadership</i></b>	<b><i>Teacher Leadership</i></b>	<b><i>School Improvement</i></b>	<b><i>Drivers of Change</i></b>
Lack of agreed definition.	Lack of agreed definition.		Government policy
Different models of DL.		An approach aimed at supporting schools in managing change, focused on teaching-learning processes to improve student outcomes (Hopkins, 2001).	Local policy
Links to other forms of shared leadership where leadership is not the preserve of an individual.	Described as DL in action (Muijs and Harris, 2003).		School priorities.
DL is distinguished by its use as an analytical tool and the centrality of the situation. (Spillane, 2006)	Role of Headteacher remains central in enabling TL.		
Role of Headteacher remains central in enabling DL.	Key aim: improving teaching and learning practice and raising improvement. (York-Barr and Duke, 2004)		
Risks identified to Headteacher through accountability.			
Some studies view DL as a means of enforcing government agendas.			
<b>DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP, SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND CHANGE</b>			
<b><i>Distributed Leadership and School Improvement (Broader studies—large in number)</i></b>		<b><i>Distributed leadership, school improvement and change (Special education studies—mostly international, small in number)</i></b>	
Conflicting views about the role of DL in directly securing school improvement, with no evidence of direct links to pupil outcomes.		Key change and focus of school improvement is the need to meet needs of new and growing generation of pupils with CLDD. Strategies linked to successful schools which focus on TL are championed:	
Mediated relationship contended by some studies: typified by Harris (2009a) whereby DL seen to provide the framework for strategies linked to successful schools through TL, collaborative practice, PLCs, capacity building, knowledge creation and social capital.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special education teachers urged to develop personalised learning pathways based on inquiry. (Carpenter, et al., 2011 and 2012)</li> <li>• International studies reflect use of collaborative inquiry and PLCs to meet complex pupil needs.</li> </ul>	
School improvement linked to patterns of distribution (Leithwood <i>et al.</i> , 2007).		Knowledge creation, improved motivation and staff retention. All teachers as leaders. (York-Barr <i>et al.</i> , 2005)	



The literature provided very few studies that throw light on what is meant by DL in special school contexts. This paucity of research was recognised by a DfE review of leadership in special schools (2013). Moreover, most of the studies were from outside England. That said, as with broader studies, the enabling role of the Headteacher was central. In these studies, however, the focus was very much on TL, including collaboration and inquiry approaches, with York-Barr *et al.*, (2005) asserting that all teachers in special education were TLs because of the nature of their role.

In considering what is meant by school improvement in the context of leadership, Hopkins (2001) described it as an approach which aimed to support schools in managing change and focused on teaching and learning processes to improve students' outcomes and paralleled the aims of TL in mainstream and special education studies (Peters, 2002; York-Barr and Duke, 2004; Billingley, 2007). Whilst the literature did not find any direct links between DL and improved student outcomes, it was widely acknowledged that DL provided a framework (Harris, 2009a) for strategies linked to successful schools such as TL, collaborative practice, PLCs, capacity building and social capital. Research also linked school improvement to patterns of distribution. Additionally, in special education it was seen to be linked to improved motivation and staff retention.

In considering what is meant by change in the context of leadership, government policy emerged as a key driver, in all sectors. In relation to this, one strand of the literature viewed DL as a means of enforcing government agendas and questioned how far power was distributed. However, a significant change in special education was the growing complexity of pupil needs. In England it was recognised that in meeting these needs special education

teachers were required to develop personalised pathways based on inquiry (Carpenter, 2011 and 2012). International studies also indicated the importance of collaborative inquiry and PLCs in meeting such needs (Schechter and Feldman, 2013). Together this suggested the role of TL was crucial in special education in meeting this challenge.

## CHAPTER 3

### DESIGN

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the design adopted to address the research questions:

- What insights do school leaders' accounts give us into how they experience managing change and school improvement through distributed leadership?
- What are school leaders' perceptions of the outcomes of distributed leadership in securing school improvement?

Philosophical and theoretical perspectives underpinning the research, including ontology, epistemology and research strategies, research design, data collection methods, data analysis and ethical considerations will be reviewed. An overview of the research process can be found in Diagram 1 (p. 82).

#### 3.2 Philosophical Foundations

Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality and the phenomenon that is being investigated. There are divergent views about what this entails. Whilst realists contend that 'objects have an independent existence and are not dependent for it on the knower' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, p.5), idealists and nominalists, assert 'that objects of thought are merely words and that there is no independently accessible thing constituting the meaning of a word', (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, p.5). Thus, the world is construed in different ways by different people and can have multiple realities (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). The former view is associated with objectivism and positivist approaches and research is

typically conducted using quantitative methods; whilst the latter is linked with subjectivism, interpretivism and phenomenological approaches and research is typified by qualitative methods. In this study, the latter view was adopted, seeing reality as the perceptions of individuals revealed through the things they say and do. This is reflected in Chapter 4 where quotations from interviewees allow them to speak for themselves.

Epistemology concerns 'the very bases of knowledge – its nature and forms, how it can be acquired and how it can be communicated to other human beings', (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, p.5). Positivists see knowledge as objective and tangible, with the researcher taking on the role of observer using quantitative methods. By contrast anti-positivists view knowledge as subjective, with the researcher taking on a participant role, typically using qualitative methods. The latter view was adopted as an effective way to gather knowledge about perceptions of the role of DL in managing change and school development.

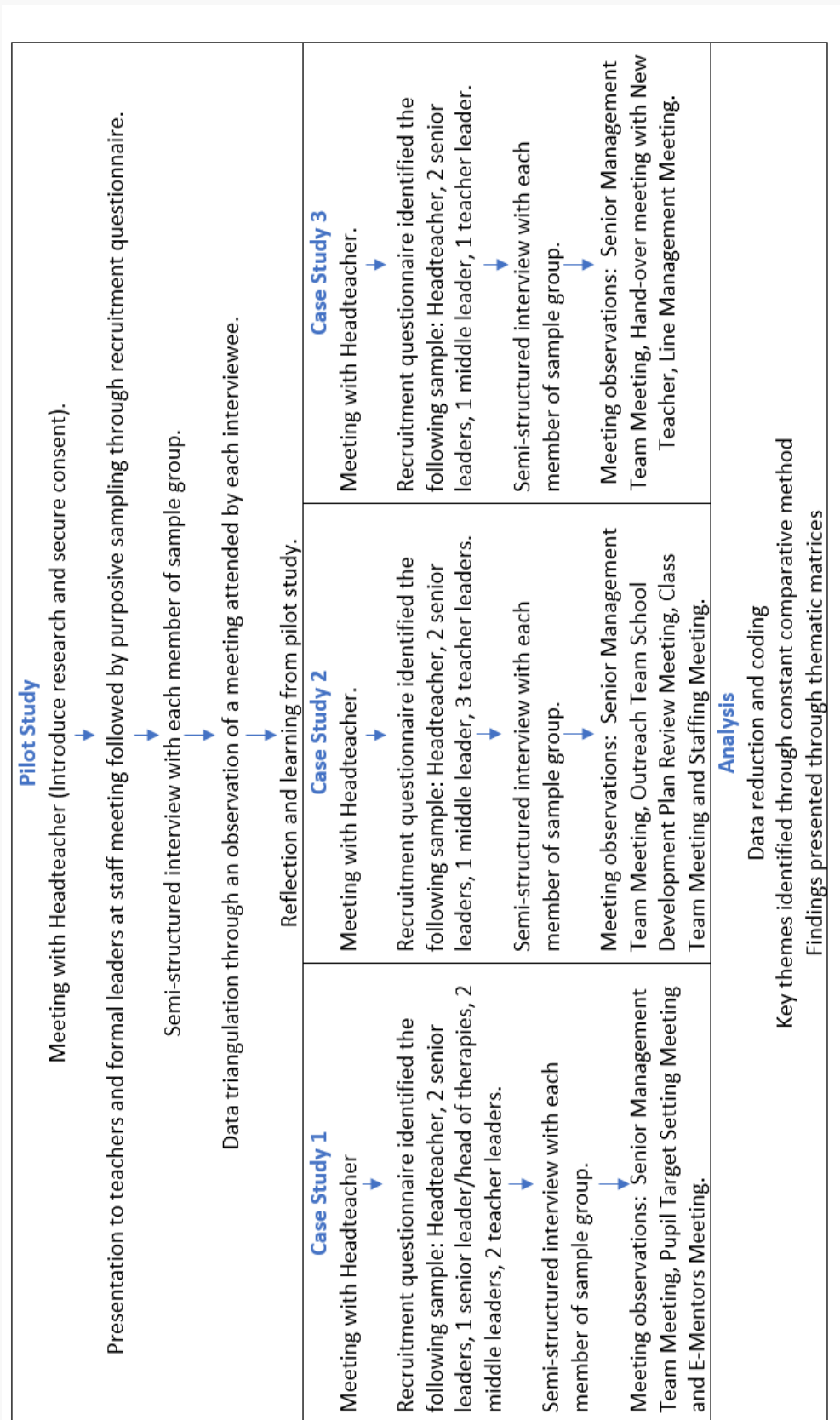
### **3.3 Theoretical Perspectives**

Brundrett and Rhodes (2014) assert that the researcher's philosophical approach will determine the research strategy adopted. In this study, an interpretivist/subjectivist strategy was adopted, based on the ontological and epistemological positions outlined above. Thomas (2013) defined interpretivism as a strategy that focuses on individuals, the way they interrelate, what they think, and that is constructivist in seeking to understand how they build their interpretation of the world around them. The research followed a phenomenological approach, which according to Denscombe, (2014, p.94) is characterised by 'subjectivity (rather than objectivity), description (rather than analysis), interpretation (rather than measurement) [and] agency (rather than structure)' in seeking to explore people's perceptions, attitudes,

beliefs, and feelings and to portray the meaning events have for the individual. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) noted that events and behaviour evolve over time and are situated in their context. They also focus on action. These characteristics were particularly relevant to a study which focuses on the perceptions and experience of school leaders, in relation to DL which Spillane (2006, p.14) described as taking place 'in the interaction of leaders, followers and their situation'. This approach is characterised by qualitative methods which will produce rich data regarding these areas.

By way of balance, it is important to consider why an objectivist/positivist approach would not be well suited to this study. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018, p.7) suggested that positivist/objectivist approaches apply the methodology of the natural sciences to social science, whereby the researcher takes the role of observer of 'social reality' and are characterized by a focus on 'discovering the universal laws of society and human conduct within it.' This approach sees human behaviour as determined and controlled and does not allow for intention and individualism. Thus Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018, p.15,) noted that this approach 'fails to take account of our unique ability to interpret our experiences and represent them ourselves', and thereby capture meaning, which is at the heart of this project. Nevertheless, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018, p.25) caution that separating subjectivity and objectivity, exclusively can produce a 'false dichotomy'. This approach is characterised by quantitative approaches, through which social phenomena are treated as objects (Robson, 2002).

**Diagram 1: Research Outline**



### 3.4 Positionality

In interpretivist research, knowledge is intersubjective (Thomas, 2013, p.144), thus with observations, the observer will impact on the observations and interpretations that they make. The complexities and implications of this relationship between the researcher, the subject, and the phenomenon being researched, the object, is revealed through the work of Husserl, Heidegger and Gadamer (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). In understanding the notion of intersubjectivity Heidegger's (1962, cited in Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009) concept of fore understanding stated that people are 'always already' thrown in a pre-existing world of objects, language, and culture from which they cannot be detached. He viewed phenomenology as a hermeneutic process in which the researcher attempted to interpret meaning. He argued that the researcher perceived things in the light of their prior experience but should try to overcome this by attending to the object rather than one's preconceptions. In a similar way, Husserl (1927, cited in Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p.13) argued that the researcher should 'go back to the things themselves' by 'bracketing', and putting to one side our 'taken-for-granted' experience of the world in order to get closer to perception. Finally, Gadamer's (1990, cited in Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009) hermeneutic circle dictated that the researcher should not put their preconceptions first, before beginning interpretation, as these may only be revealed once interpretation was underway.

As a researcher, I needed to develop a reflexive approach and consider positionality, to understand the participants, alongside the reasons for undertaking the research, which included:

- Experience of the rigours of Ofsted as a new headteacher committed to DL.

- 20 years working in special schools, as a headteacher, deputy, middle leader and class teacher.
- Experience as a young teacher in the 1980s in the wake of the Warnock Report, (Warnock, 1978) and later the inclusion agenda of the 1990s.

This broad experience facilitated understanding special school leadership from different perspectives, but could potentially colour the choice of interview questions, observation, and the interpretative process.

### 3.5 Methodology: Case Study

Brundrett and Rhodes (2014, p.13) defined methodology as the 'broad system or body of practices and procedures that will be employed to investigate a set of phenomena'. The methodology used in this research was a multiple case study, focussing on three special schools, which Denscombe (2014) asserted was well suited to small scale research projects.

The literature gives many differing definitions of what constitutes a case study, so much so that it has been described as 'contested terrain' (Yazan, 2015, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, p. 375). However, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018, p.375) noted that a single definition may be 'elusive and unnecessary'. Thus, some of its broader characteristics and relevance, will be considered in this section. Simons (2009, p.21) defined a case study as an 'in depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity of a particular project, policy, programme or system in a real-life context', which Thomas (2013) added was bounded by time. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018, p.376) noted that one of the strengths of case studies was that by looking at questions such as how and why, in real contexts, they recognised 'that context is an important determinant of cause and effect'. Context was at the



heart of this study as, whilst there was a vast literature around DL in mainstream schools, little existed in relation to special schools. This research was focused clearly on the context of special schools.

Hitchcock and Hughes (1995, p.317, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, p.376) build on this understanding and identified the key characteristics of a case study as follows:

- Rich and thick description of relevant events.
- Chronological account of events.
- A blend of analysis and description.
- Focuses on understanding the perceptions of individuals or groups.
- Highlights specific relevant events.
- The researcher is involved in the case.
- Richness of the data is reflected through findings.

Denscombe (2014) added that case studies were characterised by relationships and processes rather than outcomes, were well suited to small scale research projects, took a holistic view of phenomena, and allowed for the use of a variety of methods (Figure 13). This made them a flexible approach, aligned to qualitative approaches. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995, p.95, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, p.376) contended that 'there is frequently a resonance between cases studies and interpretive methodologies.' Due to potential complexity and variables, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) advised the use of more than a single data collection tool and source of evidence to catch the implications of these. Therefore, semi-structured interviews and observations were used.

Denscombe (2014) outlined some disadvantages in the use of case studies, which needed to be considered prior to research being undertaken (Figure 13). Denscombe (2014, p.64) stated case studies have been criticised for the 'credibility of generalisations', made from them, and warned care should be taken to demonstrate the extent to which one case compared to another. In the research undertaken a comparison was made between each school, considering school contexts, but no attempt at generalisation was made.

It may also be difficult to set boundaries for a case study, deciding which information sources to include or not. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018, p.376) argued that 'researchers must be clear what their unit of analysis is, what is the level of their analysis, what constitutes the case and what are the boundaries in case study research.' Yin (2009, p.18) also stated that the boundary between a phenomenon and its context can be easily blurred and therefore it is important to set the case in its context.

Additionally, gaining access to case study settings can be challenging and may generate ethical issues. In this research two of the Headteachers initially approached, declined to participate, due to school circumstances at the time. For the three schools who took part, the process of gaining consent, was lengthy and complex. Also, case studies focus on process rather than outcomes, typically generating rich descriptions, rather than statistical data, and therefore are sometimes viewed, as suitable for descriptive accounts rather than analysis or evaluation. Denscombe (2014) questioned whether this was justifiable and advised the need for rigour. Thomas (2011) developed a typology for case studies, which was used as a framework for this research. Thomas (2011, p.513) noted that 'the subject of the inquiry will be an instance of a class of phenomena that provides an analytical frame – an object – within which the study is

conducted and which the case illuminates and explicates’. This built on the work of Wiewiorka (1992, p.160) who argued that in order ‘to talk about a case you also need a means of interpreting it or placing it in a context,’ then the purpose of the study, the analytical approach to be used, and the process to be followed.

Based on Thomas’ (2011) typology, the subject of inquiry was the perceptions and experiences of a group of senior, middle and teacher leaders in three special schools, whilst the object was DL in the context of these schools. The context was of particular importance due to the paucity of research on DL in special schools. The purpose of the research was to gain an insight into DL in special school settings. Each school formed an instrumental case study, whilst together the three schools formed a multiple case study, that provided a fuller picture of DL across the schools. The approach was descriptive, in that it was used to produce an account of DL at work. Finally, the process adopted was that of a multiple snapshot case study providing data from a particular point in time in each of the schools.

**Figure 13: Advantages and disadvantages of case studies (Denscombe 2014, pp. 63-64)**

Advantages of Case Study approach	Disadvantages of Case Study approach
Suited to small scale research	Credibility of generalisations
Takes a holistic view	Difficulties in defining boundaries
Gives in-depth view of complex situations	Gaining access to case study settings
Facilitates the use of multiple methods	Focus on processes rather than measurable end products
Makes use of naturally occurring settings	
Is a flexible approach	

### 3.6 Sampling of Case Studies

Curtis *et al.* (2000) noted that in qualitative studies sampling was often carried out through the selection of case studies, and that researchers should be explicit about the process of selection, as there are ethical and theoretical implications arising from choices made. Brundrett and Rhodes (2014) added that sampling was not representative, although Yin (2009) argued that multiple case studies could offer a more robust picture.

In this study five special schools were initially approached, on the basis that they were accessible within one hour by public transport. Their headteachers were provided with an outline of the research project by email and invited to participate (Appendix A). Of the initial five, two declined to participate, whilst the other three completed expressions of interest. Meetings were held with headteachers where the aims of the research and research questions, the context of the research, methodology, methods and ethics were discussed. Headteachers were provided with a participant information sheet which summarised key points. All headteachers requested that they consult with their leadership teams before making a final commitment. The following three schools agreed to participate:

School 1: an all age, multi-site special school for pupils with autism.

School 2: a primary special school for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties,

School 3: a primary special school for pupils with autism.

The three school case studies enabled the possibility for trends to emerge, that were common to them as special schools and thus supported analytical generalisation (Huberman and Miles,

1994; Robson and McCartan, 2016). Equally the context of each organisation, which Spillane (2006) viewed as highly significant, could produce contrasting data.

### **3.7 Data Collection Methods: Interviews**

Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were used as the primary data collection strategy. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018, p.506) stated that interviews allowed participants 'to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live'. Robson and McCartan (2016, p.286) added that they provided 'rich and highly illuminating material' that could reveal a 'virtually unique window on what lies behind our actions'. They were therefore well suited to researching the perceptions and experiences of participants.

#### **3.7.1 Advantages and Disadvantages of Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews have numerous advantages. Robson and McCartan (2016, p.290) described them as a flexible tool whereby, 'Interviewers have their shopping list of topics they want to get responses to, but have considerable freedom in the sequencing of questions, their exact order and in the amount of time and attention given to different topics'. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018, p.508) commented that interviewers could change the wording of questions, explain them, as well as adding to them. Lines of inquiry could be developed during the interview by following up interesting responses (Robson and McCartan, 2016). Semi-structured interviews were described by Brundrett and Rhodes (2014, p.272) as a 'natural method' in educational research, as teachers are articulate and skilled in interaction with others. Additionally, they allowed for the observation of non-verbal cues which could either support understanding or reverse meaning (Robson and McCartan, 2016, p.286). They also have a high response rate as they are pre-arranged and scheduled for a convenient time and

location. During this research, the deputy head or headteacher of each school arranged the timing and location of each interview to fit with individual timetables and the school calendar. Denscombe (2014, pp.201-202) identified a range of other advantages of semi-structured interviews which are summarised in Figure 14.

Interviews also had disadvantages. Robson and McCartan (2016) noted that they required careful planning and could be expensive in terms of interviewer time and travel, requiring time to visit, getting permissions, confirming arrangements, and rescheduling appointments if necessary. Additionally, interviews are time consuming to transcribe. Robson and McCartan (2016) stated that a one-hour tape could take ten hours to transcribe. Indeed, in one set of interviews within this research, the sound of traffic through an open window and background noise from a fan on a hot day, meant that sections of tapes had to be listened to several times to ensure an accurate transcription. Robson and McCartan (2016) noted that although simple to use, audio recordings can create inhibitions in participants, and do not capture non-verbal communication such as body language.

Questions can be asked about the validity of data, as what interviewees profess to do may not be consistent with their practice. Whilst semi-structured interviews offer the interviewer considerable freedom, Oppenheimer (1992) posited that where the wording of a question is altered it becomes, in effect a different question. Similarly, where data is affected by context and individuals interviewed, consistency is hard to achieve.

A disadvantage identified by Denscombe (2014) was the issue of interviewer effect. Kvale (1996, p.14) described an interview as an exchange of ideas between two or more people. They are therefore intersubjective, and bias is difficult to rule out, both through the conduct

of the interview, wording questions and the process of analysis which may be influenced by the interviewer’s own views and interpretation of data. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) warned, that interview responses may be affected by the relative age, race, class, dress and language of interviewers and interviewees, as well as power imbalances. Additionally, Thomas (2013, p.208) suggested that interviewees may aim to please, leading to ‘prestige bias’.

Finally, the process of conducting the interview requires great skill and is characterised by its ‘daunting complexity’ (Oppenheim, 1992, p.65). According to Kvale (1996, cited in Bryman, 2008, p.445) the interviewer needs to be knowledgeable, structuring, clear, gentle, sensitive, open, steering, critical, remembering and interpreting. Cohen, Manion and Morrison, (2018) added to this list that the interviewer must also be able to establish a rapport with the interviewee, which included establishing trust about confidentiality, anonymity, and honesty.

**Figure 14: Advantages and disadvantages of semi-structured interviews (Denscombe 2014, pp. 201-203)**

Advantages of semi-structured interviews	Disadvantages of semi-structured interviews
Depth of information	Validity – based on what people say rather than do.
Valuable insights on depth information	Data can be skewed by identity of interviewer
Simple equipment required	Reliability – data affected by context and individuals.
Gives informants views, priorities and ideas	Data is time consuming to analyse
High response rate as pre-arranged and scheduled for a convenient time and location.	High cost of interviewer’s time and travel
Can be therapeutic for interviewees to talk about their ideas to an uncritical listener	Use of audio recorders can inhibit informant
Good validity - Data can be checked for accuracy and relevance with the participant during a face-to-face interview	Potential invasion of privacy caused by tactless interviewers.

### 3.7.2 Planning Interview Schedules

In planning the interviews Thomas's (2013) framework was adopted, which used predetermined questions that could be modified on the spot. This provided structure to manage the interview process, whilst allowing flexibility to follow up responses (Robson and McCartan, 2016). Firstly, themes that related to the research questions and emerged from the literature review were identified as follows:

**Research question 2:** What insights do school leaders accounts give us into how they experience managing change and school improvement through distributed leadership?

- Power and empowerment
- Accountability and trust
- Role of the Headteacher
- School culture and relationships between colleagues: collaboration and teams

**Research question 3:** What are school leaders' perceptions of the outcomes of distributed leadership in securing school improvement?

- Change and school improvement: processes and drivers
- Indirect outcomes of DL: advantages and disadvantages
- Direct outcomes: teaching and learning; pupil outcomes

Questions were then developed from these themes. In designing the schedule, questions were adapted to reflect different roles. Thus, a separate schedule was used for the Headteacher and other leaders. Permission was sought to tape interviews to enable active listening, observation of visual cues, structuring of the interview and noting of any points to be explored



later, as suggested by Brundrett and Rhodes (2014). Most questions were open ended to gain an understanding of individual perspectives and avoid leading respondents. Follow-up questions and prompts were developed to support the main questions, being mindful of Thomas's (2013) cautioning that care needed to be taken not to lead participants. Questions were planned in a sequence, moving from simple to more searching questions, as recommended by Robson and McCartan, (2016). Wherever possible interviewees were asked to give examples to expand responses. The interview schedule is contained in Appendix F.

### **3.7.3 Interview Sampling Procedures**

Within each school purposive sampling was used, whereby individuals were selected because of their relevance to the issue being investigated or their knowledge, role, or experience (Denscombe, 2014). This professes no representativeness (Thomas, 2013) and therefore it is important to discuss how this was done (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2014). In deciding how many people to interview Kvale (1996, p. 101) argued that enough interviews should be conducted to get the information that was sought. Therefore, in each of the schools I aimed to interview the Headteacher, four formal leaders from across the school (two senior leaders and two middle leaders), and two teacher leaders. This would provide as wide a spread of leadership as possible, whilst obtaining more than one voice from each leadership group, and remaining manageable within a small-scale project, in terms of the data generated and time needed for analysing and transcribing (Denscombe, 2014). Drever (1995, cited in Brundrett and Rhodes, 2014) referred to this process as 'quota sampling'.

To identify the sample, a single question questionnaire was administered which asked teachers to nominate up to three colleagues who they would go to for advice. Robinson (2009)

noted that this does not necessarily mean that these are people who provide sound advice but can reasonably be assumed to do so if teachers are prepared to go back to them. This strategy was also used by Spillane *et al.* (2008) for the identification of teacher leaders. Teachers were additionally asked to indicate their role and the kind of advice they sought from the individual named. This was used to support the selection of a diverse group of leaders if two leaders received the same number of nominations. Those teachers who were nominated most frequently within each group were then interviewed.

#### **3.7.4 Piloting Headteacher Engagement and Sampling Processes**

A pilot study is a small-scale version of a study in preparation for a main study, which generally increases the likelihood of success in the latter (Lewis-Beck, Bryman and Liao, 2004), by revealing inevitable problems before a design becomes a reality, (Robson and McCartan, 2016). A pilot study is particularly important for some methods, such as in the design of a questionnaire, but can be incorporated within the study itself in qualitative methods as, 'The effort needed in gaining access and building up acceptance and trust is often such that one would be reluctant to regard a case study .... simply as a pilot', (Robson and McCartan, 2016, p.401). I carried out a pilot study in my school but decided not to include this in the final data, to ensure consistency based on learning from the pilot.

Prior to the pilot study, a PowerPoint presentation was made to the Headteacher, to outline the research purpose, content, and intent. The Headteacher was concerned about how the research would benefit the school, and this promoted further consideration of reciprocity. The recruitment questionnaire was piloted with teachers at a staff meeting, following an updated PowerPoint presentation explaining the background to the research, ethical considerations

and what participation would entail. This was useful in ensuring that the whole process could be completed in 30 minutes as indicated by the researcher to headteachers.

Teachers were given a participant information sheet to read and a consent form to sign if they were happy to participate (Appendix B). The recruitment questionnaires (Appendix E) were completed at the end of the meeting which ensured a high response rate without impinging on teachers' own time. There were no questions at the end of the presentation, but by circulating amongst respondents I was able to field questions informally. When the surveys were analysed, it emerged that teachers mostly identified senior leaders and only a few teacher leaders. However, the interviews reflected that teachers often approached each other for advice. Therefore, it was stressed that teacher leaders could be named where appropriate in the main study.

Changes were also made to the recruitment questionnaire because of the pilot. In the pilot questionnaire respondents were asked to name three leaders they would go to for advice and were given examples of potential areas in which advice may be sought. Their responses showed that these suggestions may have led and limited respondents, with one writing 'all of the above'. These suggestions were therefore not included in the final recruitment questionnaire, which resulted in richer and more varied individual data being produced. In the pilot, respondents were not asked to state the role of the people they nominated. However, as these distinctions would not be clear in other schools the final questionnaire asked respondents to identify the role of each person that they would approach for advice to distinguish between teacher, middle and senior leaders.

### 3.7.5 Administration of Recruitment Questionnaires

A 30-minute slot was allocated by the Headteacher of each school, at a scheduled staff meeting, for the introduction of the research to teachers and completion of the recruitment questionnaire. At School 1, one teacher asked if she could nominate a member of staff who was a senior leader, but also worked as an occupational therapist at the school. This was agreed as it reflected the high priority of partnership working between teachers and therapists in the school. Questionnaires were analysed to identify those senior, middle and teacher leaders who were named most frequently. Where numbers tied areas of advice and work within the school were used to obtain a varied sample. Decisions were reached on which teachers were to be regarded as senior or middle leaders in consultation with the Headteacher at each school, based on what that meant in their school.

In all three schools, senior leaders held whole school areas of responsibility, such as assessment or safeguarding, were either Deputy Heads or Assistant Heads and were members of the Senior Leadership/Strategic/Management Team depending on school terminology. Middle leaders in schools 1 and 3 acted as team leaders for Key Stages, for which they received pay allowances, with some having additional responsibilities. They also belonged to a middle leadership group, which was attended by senior leaders, and maintained class teaching responsibilities. Teacher leaders in schools 1 and 3 schools, held responsibilities, which were either voluntary and therefore unpaid, or for subject co-ordination for which they were paid. However, these teachers were not part of leadership group meetings. In School 2 the school staffing structure was flatter. Only one middle leader was distinguishable by way of pay

allowances. Therefore, a larger number of teacher leaders were identified who nevertheless took on significant leadership work.

A sample of seven leaders, as described above, was recruited at School 2. In School 1 an additional senior leader, who was both therapies leader and Assistant Head, was included to reflect school priorities. At school 3 staff absence and pressures of workload on the middle leadership group meant that it was only possible to recruit a sample of five: the Headteacher, two senior leaders, one middle leader and one teacher leader. Each of the sample group of 20 participated in a semi-structured interview and were observed as part of a meeting to triangulate the data.

### **3.7.6 Piloting of Interviews**

Eight interviews were carried out in the pilot study: the Headteacher and Associate Headteacher, two senior leaders, two middle leaders and two teacher leaders. In doing this it was hoped to assess the questions in terms of their clarity and participants' understanding of their meaning, whether it was possible to cover the interview in the 45-60 minutes allocated, become familiar with the interview schedule and develop my interviewing skills. An audio recording was made of the interviews.

As a result of the pilot the interview schedules used for both for the Headteacher and for other leaders were adapted as follows:

- Question 2: What are your views on distributed leadership? This question was inserted, as during the pilot the word 'delegation' was used by the Headteacher in preference to distribution. Other leaders were unclear about the meaning of the term.

This question gave the opportunity to check understanding and recap on information provided in the introductory PowerPoint if necessary.

- Headteacher questions 12 and 13 and corresponding leadership questions 10 and 11: The order of these questions were reversed with teaching and learning being discussed before pupil outcomes.

In terms of participant response Bryman (2008) noted that pilot studies are useful in assessing how comfortable interviewees feel with the questions. One respondent asked how honest she could be and whether any comments could be traced back to her. She was assured that all responses were confidential and anonymous and appeared happy with this. The pilot was particularly useful in developing my confidence as an interviewer (Bryman, 2008). Through becoming familiar with the questions, I was able to listen actively and follow up answers with prompts and probes in the study schools, clarifying meaning where necessary. The use of probes, particularly by simply asking 'How does that work?' or 'Can you give me an example of that?' produced much richer data. Where participants included information relevant to later questions in the schedule, I kept notes and when that question arrived, asked if they wished to add to what they had said. The pilot study demonstrated that interviews could be conducted within the allotted timeframe.

On listening to audio recordings, other key learning points from the pilot interviews were to:

- Allow interviewees time to think about a question before offering to clarify or rephrase it.
- Avoid talking at the same time as interviewees as this is difficult to transcribe and an answer may be cut short.

### 3.7.7 Administering the Interviews

The sample identified through the recruitment questionnaire in each school were invited by email to participate in a 45-60-minute interview. They were provided with an outline of the key areas that would be covered in the interview and were informed that it would focus on their perceptions and experience. They were sent a Participant Information sheet, along with a consent form to return before the interviews if they wished to participate. Documentation relating to interviews is contained in Appendix C.

The date, time and location of each interview was arranged either by the Headteacher or Deputy Head in each school. Interviews with Headteachers took place in their office. Interviews with other leaders took place in a meeting room. Interviews were spread over 2 or 3 days depending on teacher commitments. Occasionally the data gathering for each school took place over a longer period, due to staff absence and the calendar of meetings, such as in school 3 or an Ofsted inspection in School 1. Data gathering was completed in each school before moving on to the next to enable immersion in each setting and to avoid confusion between schools. Spending a few days in each school meant that I was able to build rapport with interviewees. However, I was also allocated a base which ensured that I could maintain a distance and adopt a neutral stance in each interview as recommended by Denscombe (2014)

At the start of each interview participants were reminded that the interview was solely about their perceptions and experiences, to encourage rich data (Denscombe, 2014). In the event, each interview was very individual. Headteachers and senior managers gave more in-depth answers reflecting the centrality of leadership to their formal role. Middle leaders were clear

about their leadership role too. The context of the school was also reflected in contributions. For example, in school 1, where research and development had a high priority, teachers showed interest and commitment to the project as a piece of research. Interestingly, two teacher leaders did not see themselves as leaders, and more probing was needed to access information.

### **3.8 Data Triangulation: Observations**

Triangulation involves the use of multiple sources to enhance the rigour of research (Robson and McCartan, 2016, p.171) and counter possible threats to validity through researcher bias, responder bias and reactivity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985 cited in Robson 2002). Denzin (1988) identified four types of triangulation: data triangulation; observer triangulation; methodological triangulation, and theory triangulation. In this study data triangulation, where more than one method of collection was used, took place through the observation of meetings. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) considered observation to be an effective method of triangulation as it takes place in live situations which facilitates the discovery of things that participants may not freely talk about in interviews. Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2004) viewed the observation of meetings as a very appropriate tool to investigate DL in action, giving the opportunity to observe leadership practice through 'the interaction of leaders, followers and their situation' (Spillane, 2006, p.14). Adding further support, Boden (1994, cited in Morrison and Lumby, 2009, p.75) referred to meetings as 'the very stuff of management' and 'where organisations come together'.

Meeting observations were identified by interviewees from within the normal meeting cycle. For the most part these occurred close to interviews which allowed for checking of what



individual participants said when interviewed against what they did in a practical setting. The range of scenarios that emerged from the observations also provided sets of data against which to test some of the broader themes that emerged from the interviews, such as power and teacher empowerment. Between three and four meetings were observed in each school, in order to observe all the interviewees. Where participants had not been part of the interview process, they were sent an invitation to participate in the observation, a participant information sheet, and a consent form to return before the meeting if they were happy to be observed (Appendix D).

In conducting the observations, the role of 'observer-as-participant' was assumed, which Robson and McCartan (2016, p.327) described as 'someone who takes no part in the activity but whose status as researcher is known to the participants', although in a cautionary note he added, 'it is questionable whether anyone who is known to be a researcher can be said not to take part in the activity - in the sense that their role is now one of the roles within the larger group that includes the researcher'. Robson and McCartan (2016, p.331) highlighted that observational biases can occur through selective attention, selective encoding, selective memory, and interpersonal factors. Robson and McCartan (2016, p. 334) also stated that the presence of an observer could change the nature of what was being observed. Nevertheless, meeting observations should support the development of a more holistic understanding of the interrelationship of factors (Morrison, 1993, p.88, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, p.552). This in turn will lead to 'thick descriptions', and support accurate interpretations of events (Geertz, 1973, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, p.552)

In line with the interpretivist approach of the study, an inductive strategy for data collection was utilised. An open observation tool (Appendix G) was used to collect information based on Morrison and Lumby's (2009) observation framework, which was deliberately simple in aiming to ensure that no information was omitted. Data collected included context, content, patterns of interaction, language, emotional flow, and decision-making. A seating plan within each meeting was made to support this. Permission was given to audio record the meetings, which was transcribed as soon as possible afterwards (Thomas, 2013). This allowed greater focus on physical interaction and body language during the meetings, which was noted on the recording sheet. Finally, during each observation I selected a position where I was least visible to the group, to reduce the impact of my presence, (Robson and McCartan, 2016).

### **3.8.1 Piloting of Observations**

The piloting of observations in my own school was useful. The following represent the main learning points:

- Where large meetings were being observed I ensured that the recorder was placed where it would pick up all the voices.
- During each observation I made brief notes to support recognition of voices on the audio recording.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

Robson and McCartan (2016, p.208, citing Israel, 2014) wrote that, 'Ethics refers to rules of conduct, typically, to ensure conformity to a code or set of principles.' In the social sciences, these codes of practice are upheld by academic ethics committees guided by the ESRC

Framework for Research Ethics (ERSC, 2016). Thus, approval was gained through the University of Birmingham Ethics committee before my research began.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018, p.111) recognised that whilst codes of practice provided researchers with advice, ethical considerations were much broader and more complex:

There are rarely easy, 'black-and-white' decisions on ethical matters. Rather researchers must take informed decisions on a case-by-case basis.

This resonated with MacFarlane's (2009) concept of ethics in practice, which in contrast to procedural ethics, is about making decisions in the field, and as such is better suited to qualitative studies. MacFarlane's (2009) framework was based on virtue theory whereby research is about *being* rather than *doing*, and is underpinned by seven key virtues - courage, respectfulness, resoluteness, sincerity, humility, and reflexivity - which, he argued, made a good researcher. Notwithstanding this complexity, Denscombe (2014) outlined four principles that underpinned ethical approaches to research: first, participation should be voluntary and based on informed consent; second, participants interests should be protected; third, researchers should be open and honest in their approach and fourth, research should comply with legal requirements.

### **3.9.1 Informed Consent**

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018, p.123, citing Howe and Moses, 1999) considered informed consent to be: 'A cornerstone of ethical behaviour, as it respects the right of individuals to exert control over their lives and to take decisions for themselves.' Citing Diener and Crandall (1978, p.57), Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018, p.122) defined informed consent as: 'those procedures for individuals to choose whether or not to participate in

research, once they have been told what it is about and what it requires i.e., all those factors which might influence their decision. This definition involved four elements: competence, voluntarism, full information and comprehension’.

Informed consent is underpinned by an individual’s right to privacy which Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018, p.129) described as a primordial value and noted: ‘It is *freedom from* as well as *freedom for,*’ whereby a person has a right not to take part in research. In understanding what this means in practical terms Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018, p.125) suggested that participants should be made aware of ‘the purposes, contents, procedures, reporting and dissemination of the research.’ Robson and McCartan (2016, citing Boynton, 2005) added that participants should have time to consider their participation, complete a consent form and that the researcher should double check that participants understand their role and any implications for them. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018, p.125) highlighted another potential barrier to voluntary participation: ‘It is important to ensure that participants are not railroaded into participating, for example, by a school principal who makes a decision for the staff.’

In this research project information was presented firstly to the Headteacher in seeking agreement for the school to participate, followed by a similar presentation to all teachers when they were invited to complete the recruitment questionnaire. Participants who were invited to participate in interviews and observations were provided with information, specific to each stage of the research, by email. At each stage participants were able to ask questions either verbally or by email. This was supported by a participant information sheet for

everyone, which was specific to each stage of the research process, ensuring that each participant made an individual decision about their involvement.

An important aspect of informed consent is the right to withdraw at any stage of the research (Denscombe, 2014). Robson and McCartan (2016) stated that participants should have multiple opportunities to do this, whilst at the same time recognising that this may create difficulties in securing new participants. In accordance with this recommendation participants were asked for their consent at each stage of the research process. They were provided with both mine, and my supervisor's email address. In School 3 several participants who were invited to participate in interviews declined to do so and volunteered that this was because of workload. As a result of this the sample for School 3 was reduced to five but remained representative of each leadership group.

Crow *et al.* (2006, cited in Robson and McCartan, 2016) identified both advantages and disadvantages of informed consent. Positively, it can prepare participants for data collection and establish a relationship based on equality, which promotes confidence and openness. However, the process can inhibit participation rates and the building of a rapport which affects the quality of the data. Through discussing the research and sharing my background in special education I was able to build a rapport with all participants.

### **3.9.2 Anonymity**

Another key ethical issue, based on the right to privacy, is anonymity. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018, p.129) asserted: 'The essence of anonymity is that information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identify.' This includes non-traceability, although Raffe, Bundell and Bibby (1989, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018) noted that there

can be no absolute guarantees of anonymity when data is combined. Nevertheless, in the research, in line with Frankfort- Nachmias and Nachmias (1992, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018) schools were identified as School 1, School 2 and School 3. No indication was given of geographical location. Within each school participants were identified by a code describing their leadership group and a number within that group. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) suggested that anonymity can be used to make unsupported or untrue comments. A comparison of interviewee's responses indicated that this did not appear to be the case.

### **3.9.3 Confidentiality**

Distinct from anonymity is the issue of confidentiality, which also protects participants' right to privacy, and is defined by Cohen, Manion and Morrison, (2018, p.130) as,

Not disclosing information from a participant in any way that might identify that individual or that might enable the individual to be traced. It can also mean not discussing an individual with anybody else or passing on the information to others in any form that can identify individuals.

Kimmel (1988, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018) stated that this was important, as where promises of confidentiality are weak respondents may be unwilling to participate. Howe and Moses (1999, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018) however, perceived an issue to the quality of description in interpretive research, in protecting confidentiality. In this research, one participant asked for reassurance that anything said would be in confidence. On another occasion a participant declined to give an example of a statement as it was 'too

personal'. It was made clear to participants that transcripts would only be shared with my supervisor, if necessary.

Participant information sheets and consent forms, specific to each stage of the data collection, can be found in appendices A, B, C and D. These indicate that participants were fully informed about research purposes, research methods, what their involvement involved, ethical review for the study, why they have been invited to participate, what participation involved, how they would benefit from participation, their right of withdrawal, confidentiality, and secure data storage before giving consent to take part.

### **3.10 Data Analysis**

Robson and McCartan (2016, p.460) noted of qualitative data that 'there is no clear and accepted single set of conventions for analysis corresponding to those observed with quantitative data', whilst Miles and Huberman (1994, p.10) defined analysis as consisting of 'three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification.' This approach was adopted in the research.

In reducing the data from interviews and observations transcripts were coded using descriptive codes (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Sample coding sheets can be found in Appendix I. At the outset of the process a 'start list' (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.58) of codes was established, based on key themes that were explored through the interview questions, themes which emerged from the literature review, and themes which appeared prominent when transcribing the tapes. As the coding process continued, codes were revised in the light of participants' views, and the understanding developed of each school, reflecting Miles and Huberman's (1994, p.62) view that: 'The field site has a life of its own that becomes more

meaningful and decipherable as you spend time there sharing the daily routines of actors in the setting.'

Codes were also lengthened (Miles and Huberman, 1994) to indicate sub-categories within a code. Whilst coding, memos, which Glaser (1978, pp.83-84, cited in Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.72) defined as 'the theorising write up of ideas about codes and the relationships as they strike the analyst while coding', were noted on the transcript. Passages within the transcripts which captured the essence of the codes were underlined.

At this stage themes were identified for each school using the constant comparative method (Thomas, 2013, p.235). In doing this, the codes recorded for each participant were listed, on a question-by-question basis. A separate sheet of paper was used for each participant. The sheets of paper were then spread out to give a visual overview of the codes allocated to each participant for each question. Tentative themes were identified, across each school, which were then checked, by referring to the transcripts, to ensure they reflected participants' perceptions. This process was repeated until I was satisfied that the themes reflected the transcripts.

Miles and Huberman (1994, p.240) viewed matrices as a flexible tool and described their purpose as furthering the understanding and meaning of the data. Thus, a matrix (Figure 15) was used to record the themes from interviews for each school. Data was recorded separately for the Headteacher and each leadership group. Short phrases were used to summarise participants' views, staying as close to their words as possible (Thomas, 2013). The process facilitated a broad comparison between schools, and leadership categories. Through reflecting on the data summaries listed on the matrices for each theme, principal themes were



identified. Where relevant, broad cross-school themes were then identified. Where contrasting themes existed between schools, this was recognised. A similar matrix (Figure 16) was used to record themes from meeting observations.

**Figure 15: Interview data analysis matrix**

Participants						
Sub-themes	Headteacher	Senior leaders	Middle leaders	Teacher leaders	Main themes	Broad cross school themes
School 1						
School 2						
School 3						

**Figure 16: Observation data analysis matrix**

Observations			
	School 1	School 2	School 3
Sub themes	Name of meeting	Name of meeting	Name of meeting

Finally, data from the interview and observation matrices were used to reach conclusions using a summary matrix (Figure 17).

**Figure 17: Data summary matrix**

Summary of findings			
	Data Collection Method		
Key Issues	Interviews	Observations	Central Themes

Through familiarisation with each school setting, having reworked and reflected on the data over a period of several months, I formed an understanding of the key issues that had emerged from the data. However, it was important to check the objectivity of these findings. Miles and Huberman (1994, p.243) stated that common ways of reaching conclusions include noting patterns, making contrasts and comparisons. Thus, the interview and observation matrices were printed out to check whether these conclusions were supported by the data or whether issues had been overlooked. A summary of findings, that supported the selection of key issues from interviews and observations, was included on the matrix. In a final column, as part of the interpretive process, the issues were reframed as central themes.

### **3.11 Validity**

Validity indicates the extent to which a research instrument measures what it purports to measure (Robson and McCartan, 2016). This is critical in the view of Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) who observed that if a piece of research was invalid it was worthless. In exploring the perceptions and experiences of leaders of DL, semi-structured interviews provided a suitable tool in that participants' responses were based on their personal experience.

Potential issues around the imposition of bias by the researcher, or respondent bias, and theoretical stance (Robson and McCartan, 2016) have been considered. In addition, Denscombe (2014) noted that threats to objectivity and the danger of taking data out of context can affect the validity of outcomes. These issues were addressed through ensuring a data trail, as recommended by Mason (1996, cited in Robson and McCartan, 2016) within the matrices, which allowed conclusions to be traced back to the data, and by observations as a

means of triangulation, as discussed in section 3.8. In addition to these considerations, validity was further enhanced through piloting.

### **3.12 Generalisability**

Generalisability refers to ‘the extent to which the findings of the inquiry are more generally applicable outside the specifics of the situation studied’ (Robson and McCartan, 2016, p.93) and is a concept more typically associated with quantitative approaches. Robson and McCartan (2016, p.173) noted that case studies had ‘analytical generalisability’, rather than ‘statistical generalisability’. This contributed to the development of theory, which could help researchers to understand similar cases. In this research, the small number of schools and participants would not support any type of generalisation through achieving what Small (2009, cited in Robson and McCartan, 2016, p.166) called ‘saturation’. However, Brundrett and Rhodes (2014, p.26) noted the findings may be ‘relatable’, or what Denscombe (2014, p.62) called ‘transferable’ and enable readers from other organisations to reflect on their own setting, although they caution that the researcher needs to be able to demonstrate the extent to which a case is similar to, or contrasts with, others. On a positive note, Stake (1995, p.8) observed that the real strength of case studies was ‘particularisation, not generalisation.’

### **3.13 Reliability**

Reliability, is described by (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, p.268) as ‘essentially an umbrella term for dependability, consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents.’ Reliability in interviews may be affected by using prompts and probes and the inevitability that the question schedule varies from individual to individual. However, this should increase validity and was accepted within the study. This reflects

Thomas' (2013) view that reliability is irrelevant in interpretive studies, arguing that researchers should accept their subjectivity without shame. However, Robson and McCartan (2016) added that researchers using flexible designs should ensure that their methods are demonstrated to be reliable through an evidence trail.

### 3.14 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the way in which an inquirer can 'persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.290). In quantitative methodologies this is done through establishing internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity within a study. Issues around the relevance of generalisation and reliability in qualitative approaches have already been considered in sections 3.12 and 3.13. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.293) argue that these criteria are inappropriate for naturalistic studies and put forward four parallel criteria, namely, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. They also identify a range of strategies linked to each criterion to ensure trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria and some of their strategies have been used in this study.

Credibility relates to how a researcher can 'establish confidence in the "truth" of the findings' for the participants of the inquiry within the research context (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.290). A key strategy to ensure credibility is prolonged engagement which supports learning about context and culture, which were central to this study, as well as checking for misinformation and trust building with participants (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.301). Although the time spent in each school was relatively short, data was collected, as far as possible, in discrete concentrated blocks of time. Then data collection began at another school, which supported

an accurate understanding of participants in their setting. Lincoln and Guba (1985) also suggested the use of triangulation to enhance credibility. As discussed in Section 3.8, interview data was triangulated through the observation of each participant in a meeting. Additionally interview data was triangulated through a comparison of participants' responses in each school. Negative case analysis was used in the process of constructing a model of DL (Figure 19) and a conceptual framework (Figure 21) which reflected the data from all three schools. These strategies added credibility to the research.

Transferability relates to the applicability of findings from one context to another, which Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued could only be carried out by those aiming to transfer findings. It is, however, the responsibility of the researcher to provide thick descriptions, which enable readers to make judgements about transferability to other contexts and groups of participants. In the research, rich descriptions of participants' experiences and perceptions, within their school context, were gathered through interview and observation data.

Dependability requires the researcher to take account of 'factors of instability *and* factors of phenomenal or design induced change', and to consider how these affect the research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.299). Lincoln and Guba (1985) favoured the use of an inquiry audit to assess dependability, however this was beyond the scope of the research and was not felt to be suited to an interpretivist study.

Finally, confirmability is concerned with showing that the researcher has acted in good faith (Bryman, 2008, p.379), and considers issues such as 'biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives of the inquirer', (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.290). Lincoln and Guba (1985) advocate the use of an audit trail, as part of a confirmatory audit. In the research a data trail

was presented transparently using matrices, supported by quotes from participants, a sample data coding sheet, which also showed the process for the development of themes (Appendix I), along with a description of the design process, which included my motivation and positionality.

### 3.15 Limitations

As a case study the research represents a snapshot in time and therefore the findings may not represent a typical view of each school (Denscombe, 2014). Findings may also be affected by differing levels of knowledge between myself and the participants in each school, which may affect participant engagement and my interpretation. These were reflected on, to avoid bias. Similarly, the findings may not be explicitly relatable to other special schools, particularly as special school provision varies significantly across sectors and local authorities. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the findings may be of interest as a point of comparison to readers in other special school settings.

**Figure 18: Advantages and disadvantages of qualitative analysis Denscombe (2014, pp.302-303)**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Richness and detail of the data.</li> <li>2. It is grounded.</li> <li>3. Possibility of alternative explanation.</li> <li>4. Tolerance of ambiguity and contradiction.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Difficulties in generalizing findings.</li> <li>2. Time costliness of the analysis process.</li> <li>3. Danger of taking 'data out of context'.</li> <li>4. Threats to objectivity because of the positionality of the researcher.</li> </ol>

Descombe (2014) provided a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative analysis, within an interpretivist approach, which drew together the issues identified in the

above sections on validity and trustworthiness, generalisation, reliability and limitations as shown in Figure 18.

### 3.16 Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodological basis of the research design and provided a rationale for the choice of research methods, with reference to the research literature. Theoretical and philosophical perspectives underpinning the research, including ontology, epistemology and research strategies were reviewed, which determined the methodology and data collection methods. In the light of this, an interpretivist approach was considered best suited to an exploration of the perceptions and experiences of leaders of DL, to address research questions 2 and 3.

In building on the theoretical framework, literature focused on the use of case studies, sampling, semi-structured interviews, and observation was reviewed. Data collection methods, along with adaptations made in the light of the pilot, were detailed. In outlining how data was analysed, threats to research outcomes posed by positionality, generalisability, reliability, validity and trustworthiness, and measures put in place, were assessed. A review of ethical considerations and how these were addressed was included. Chapter 4 presents the findings and analysis of the research undertaken, linked to the research questions.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

#### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the research findings, collated from data collection in the three special schools, will be presented and analysed. The wealth and depth of data collected from respondents was huge, and consequently repeated data reduction and analysis needed to be undertaken. The detailed analysis of interview questions and observation transcripts identified a number of key issues and themes. As a result, and to ensure ease of access to the latter, a thematic matrix was developed (Table 1).

**Table 1: Thematic matrix summarising the findings of interviews and observations.**

Summary of findings				
		Data Collection Method		
Key Issues	RQs	Interviews	Observations	Central Themes
<b>Understanding of DL</b>	2	Multi-faceted and all-encompassing concept through which leadership is co-ordinated.	Variety of practice.	Multi-faceted concept.
<b>Models of distribution</b>	2	Formal hierarchical, co-ordinated and organic distribution.	Formal hierarchical, co-ordinated, <i>ad hoc</i> organic distribution.	Different manifestations
<b>Mechanisms and extent of empowerment</b>	2	Different mechanisms and levels of empowerment.	Leaders structure routines to support input, with different degrees of formality.	Formal and informal distribution. Trust and relationships.
<b>Centrality of school context</b>	2	Context of the school including career paths of Headteacher, and leadership group and growing rolls impacts on nature of distribution.		Context of the school, career path of Headteacher and leaders and growing rolls underpins the nature of DL.
<b>Role of the Headteacher</b>	2	Strategic moral leader who empowers and develops others, determines the nature and extent of	Input from leaders invited and decisions reached through meetings, with the	Power, empowerment, and the



		distribution, whilst retaining the right of veto in decisions.	Headteacher sometimes pulling rank.	development of leaders.
<b>School culture and processes underpinning DL</b>	2	Collaborative relationships and teamwork underpinned by pupil centred core values which support individual approaches to meeting the needs of complex learners in special education.	Teacher leadership, teamwork, collaborative inquiry, and professional learning communities. Multidisciplinary collaboration	Teacher leadership and collaboration: a spectrum of practice, to meet the needs of complex learners
<b>Positive outcomes for leadership teaching and learning</b>	3	Increased motivation through involvement. Capacity building. Improved practice through sharing and collaboration. Disagreement about evidencing a link with pupil outcomes	Retention of staff. Individualised programmes put in place to meet complex pupil needs through multidisciplinary input. Disciplined inquiry meets needs of pupils with CLDD. Pupils achieve success in individual targets, through multidisciplinary input and collaboration between leaders	Motivation through involvement. Capacity building Development of strategies which support the needs of complex learners. Divergent views on impact of DL on pupil outcomes
<b>Negative outcomes for leadership for leadership</b>	3	Increased workload and lack of coherence and consistency	Misunderstandings and lack of clarity.	Lack of coherence

The findings and analysis are reviewed under each of the above key issues and themes and address the research questions: What insights do school leaders' accounts give us into how they experience managing change through distributed leadership? What are school leaders' perceptions of the outcomes of distributed leadership in securing improvement? Data from interview questions is summarised in tables in each section. A summary of findings from observations, which is used to triangulate interview data, is included in Table 2.

**Table 2: Thematic matrix showing sub-themes from observations.**

Observations			
	School 1	School 2	School 3
Sub-themes	<p><b>E-Mentors Meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- school-university partnerships</li> <li>- Leadership learning opportunities through mentoring and leading group builds capacity</li> <li>-TL input into decisions</li> <li>- Motivation through collaborative inquiry</li> <li>- Peer mentoring to develop strategies to meet complex needs</li> <li>- PLC : disciplined inquiry to meet complex needs</li> <li>- Role of HT in enabling and co-ordinating TL/collaborative inquiry.</li> <li>- Inquiry and mentoring leads to pupil engagement and new learning</li> </ul>	<p><b>Outreach Development Plan review meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teamwork</li> <li>- Trust-based relationships</li> <li>- Solutions focus</li> <li>- Professional and emotional mutual support.</li> <li>- Collaborative approach</li> <li>- Role of HT in supporting</li> </ul>	<p><b>New Teacher handover meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- teacher-to-teacher support</li> <li>- multidisciplinary collaboration</li> <li>- workload of teachers in special schools</li> <li>- meeting statutory requirements means all teachers are leaders.</li> <li>- sharing planning</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Pupil target setting meeting.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Multidisciplinary teamwork to support complex learners.</li> <li>- Impact of collaboration on teaching and learning and individual pupil outcomes.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Staffing meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- organic processes for decision-making</li> <li>- high degree of freedom to negotiate role given to Assistant Heads.</li> <li>- misunderstanding due to informal processes.</li> <li>- acceptance of misunderstandings.</li> <li>- high degree of trust.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Line Management Meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- formal systems.</li> <li>- accountability and support is mixed.</li> <li>- recruitment and retention of staff an issue.</li> <li>- Administrative workload in special education.</li> <li>- peer support amongst teachers.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Senior Management Team Meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Role of HT as strategic leader.</li> <li>- Senior and Middle leaders input into decision-making through SMT meeting.</li> <li>- High level of empowerment.</li> <li>- Freedom of leaders to take initiatives in their area which spread across the school.</li> <li>- Leaders work together closely and build on each other's ideas in a solutions-focused manner.</li> <li>- Use of routines for distribution of leadership.</li> <li>- Openness, trust and strong relationships enables leaders to challenge each other and accept difference.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Senior Management Team Meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- HT role as strategic leader: HT pulls rank when there is disagreement.</li> <li>- Leaders are free to decline distribution.</li> <li>- Role of SMT in the organic co-construction of strategy.</li> <li>- Formal and organic mechanisms for decision-making.</li> <li>- The balance of power and empowerment between HT and SMT.</li> <li>- DL based on expertise.</li> <li>- Communication of information through meeting schedule.</li> <li>- Strong relationships, openness and trust enable leaders to challenge each other and accept difference.</li> <li>-</li> </ul>	<p><b>Senior Management Team Meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- role of middle leaders and staff in decision-making through consultation.</li> <li>- Role of MLs in building a bridge between teachers and senior leaders.</li> <li>- DL operates and is developed through hierarchical structures and routines.</li> <li>- Consultative distribution through teams.</li> <li>- Culture of teamwork and collaboration.</li> <li>- Staff recruitment and retention an issue.</li> <li>- HT role in development of culture of DL by coaching senior leaders.</li> </ul>

	- Involvement encourages motivation. - HT co-ordinates and validates decisions		- Limits to empowerment set by HT.
		<b>Class team meeting</b> - challenges for TLs in co-ordinating multidisciplinary teams - challenges of managing class teams. - Involvement of support staff in change through routines. - Capacity building: Teachers develop skills of negotiation and mediation.	

## 4.2 Understanding of Distributed Leadership

*A multi-faceted, all-encompassing leadership concept*

In interview question 2 each participant was invited to share his or her views on DL. Data is summarised in Table 3.

**Table 3: Thematic matrix showing views on Distributed Leadership.**

Participants						
Schools	HT	SLs	MLs	TLs	Main themes	Broad cross-school themes
School 1	Empowers and trusts colleagues to interpret the vision within 'red lines', but without micromanaging.	Anybody can be a leader. A good leader empowers others to achieve potential. Supports others and co-constructs ideas as equals, leading them to their own answer. Leaders co-ordinate work	Is empowered to develop passion for teaching through play and drama.	Can spread expertise of multisensory approaches. Teachers do things well that they enjoy.	Empowerment, trust and support to develop expertise which is co-ordinated by senior leaders.	<b>Multi-faceted concept:</b> Support, trust, empowerment, accountability, happens through formal structures and

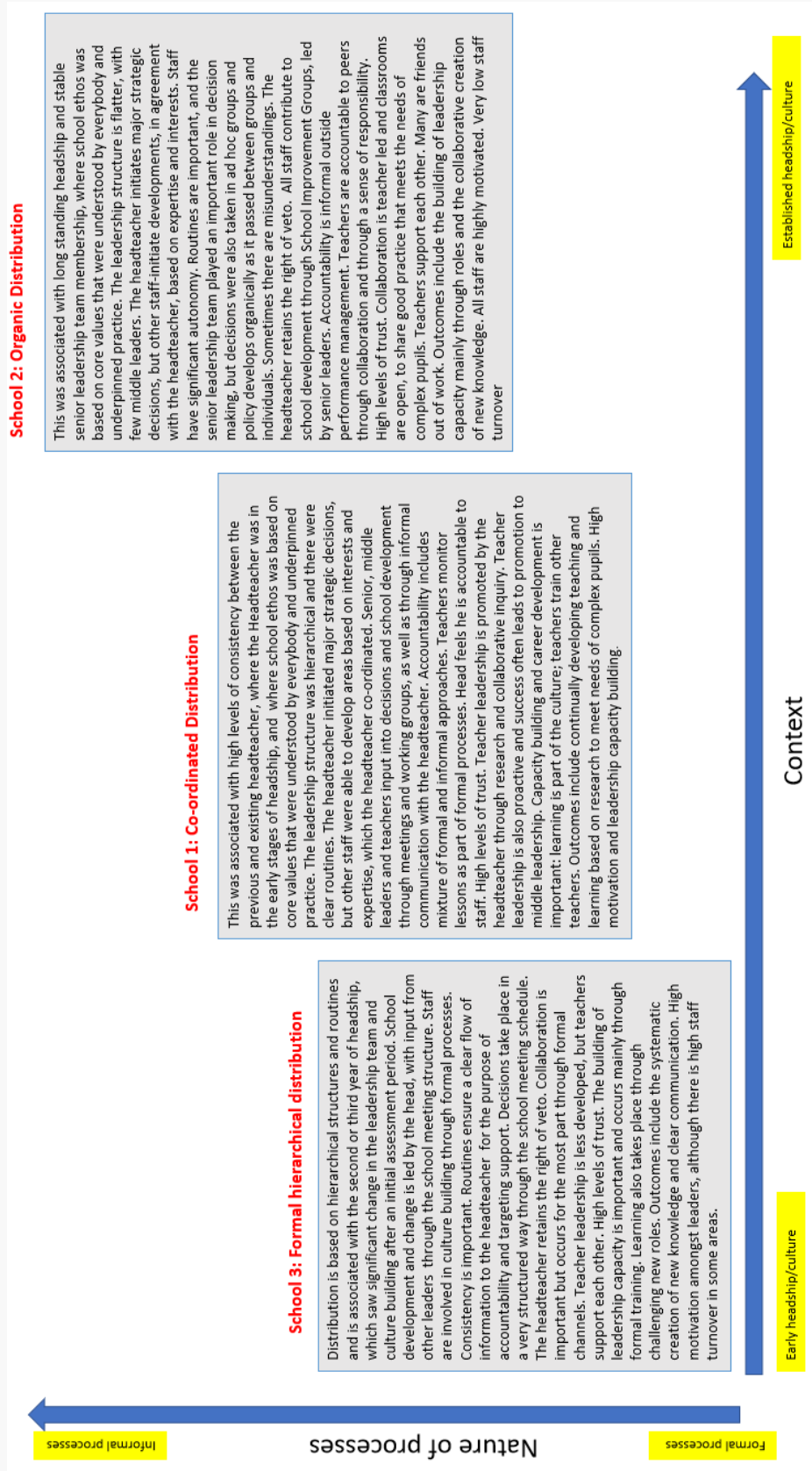
		of others to ensure going in right direction. Respect for expertise. Freedom to try something new.				routines, happens informally, initiated by staff and HT, motivates through ownership, uses strengths to support weakness, collaboration, teamwork, supports school improvement.
		Teachers ask her for resources and support	Good supportive network. Multiple sources of support.	Good to have people at different levels to support	Multiple sources of support.	
	Enables HT to be effective because of workload.	Delegated responsibilities.	Responsibilities delegated by HT.		Delegated responsibilities. Supports HT with workload.	
School 2	Supports HT with workload.	Staff are more proactive through ownership.	Using individual's strengths to support others' weaknesses strengthens the team.	Fosters collaborative workplace: people can use their skills, are listened to, are able to contribute and so are more committed. Motivated by challenges. Have a stake in the school.	Empowerment gives ownership, motivates staff and maximises strength of team.	
	Empowered and trusted to do their jobs but are accountable.	Trusts staff to fulfil responsibilities but will see if they do not. Senior managers support when asked but encourage staff to become independent. Support for staff through meetings, resources and counsellor		Limits to empowerment based on values and ethos. Empowerment based on expertise	Trust and accountability	
		Operates through formal groups, set up by HT, and	ML shared ideas with HT which led to review of		Led and initiated by HT, groups and individuals.	

		informal <i>ad hoc</i> staff groups	pupil profiling system.			
School 3		DL is synonymous with new school leadership structure.	DL is synonymous with line management system. Responsibility and consistency through system.	Synonymous with schools staffing structure and meetings schedule. All teachers are leaders of class team.	Formal structures and routines.	
	Most effective way to run the school is through collaboration, involvement in decision-making and teamwork	Staff motivated by own bit of leadership, which supports school improvement. New hierarchical structure supports consistency and communication.	Utilises peoples' strengths. Line managers provide support.	More sources of advice.	Uses individuals' strengths, and through collaboration, teamwork, and empowerment, motivates staff and supports school improvement.	

In responding to this initial open question, participants showed that they perceived DL to be a multi-faceted phenomenon, based on trust which was a positive force in facilitating school improvement. Collaboration and supportive teamwork emerged as important themes, with participants talking at length about these. Most leaders saw leadership as being distributed by headteachers or managers, however, it occurred with differing degrees of formality between schools, sometimes operating through structures and routines, set up by headteachers, and sometimes initiated by staff through individual conversations with the Headteacher. This variety of manifestation reflected the difficulties of defining DL described in the literature (Bennet *et al.*, 2003; Harris, 2004; Spillane, 2006).

In seeking to understand the nature of this diverse phenomenon the next section will aim to develop a model of distribution which identifies themes, running across schools, that account for differences in the nature of DL between schools, through the way in which they interrelate.

**Figure 19: Model of distribution showing each case study school within a multiple case study**



### 4.3 A Model of Distribution

Three models of distribution were identified within the sample schools: Formal Hierarchical Distribution, Co-ordinated Distribution and Organic Distribution. A summary of these models is shown in Figure 19. Each of these relates to the three individual case studies which together make up this multiple case study investigation. In this section these models will be outlined and will serve to introduce the three case study schools. A closer analysis of the supporting data, in relation to the literature (Telford, 1996; MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse, 2004; Ritchie and Woods, 2007; Woods, 2016) can be found in Tables 22-25 (Appendix H)

#### 4.3.1 The Case of School 3: Formal Hierarchical Distribution

In School 3 Formal Distribution (MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse, 2004) based on hierarchical systems was dominant. This was reflected in the new school leadership structure which was introduced at the start of the academic year (Figure 20) with its clear lines of accountability through line managers, and a co-ordinated network of meetings like that described by Hairon and Goh (2015). Senior, middle and teacher leaders, in School 3, also saw DL as being synonymous with the new structure, as reflected by SL2:

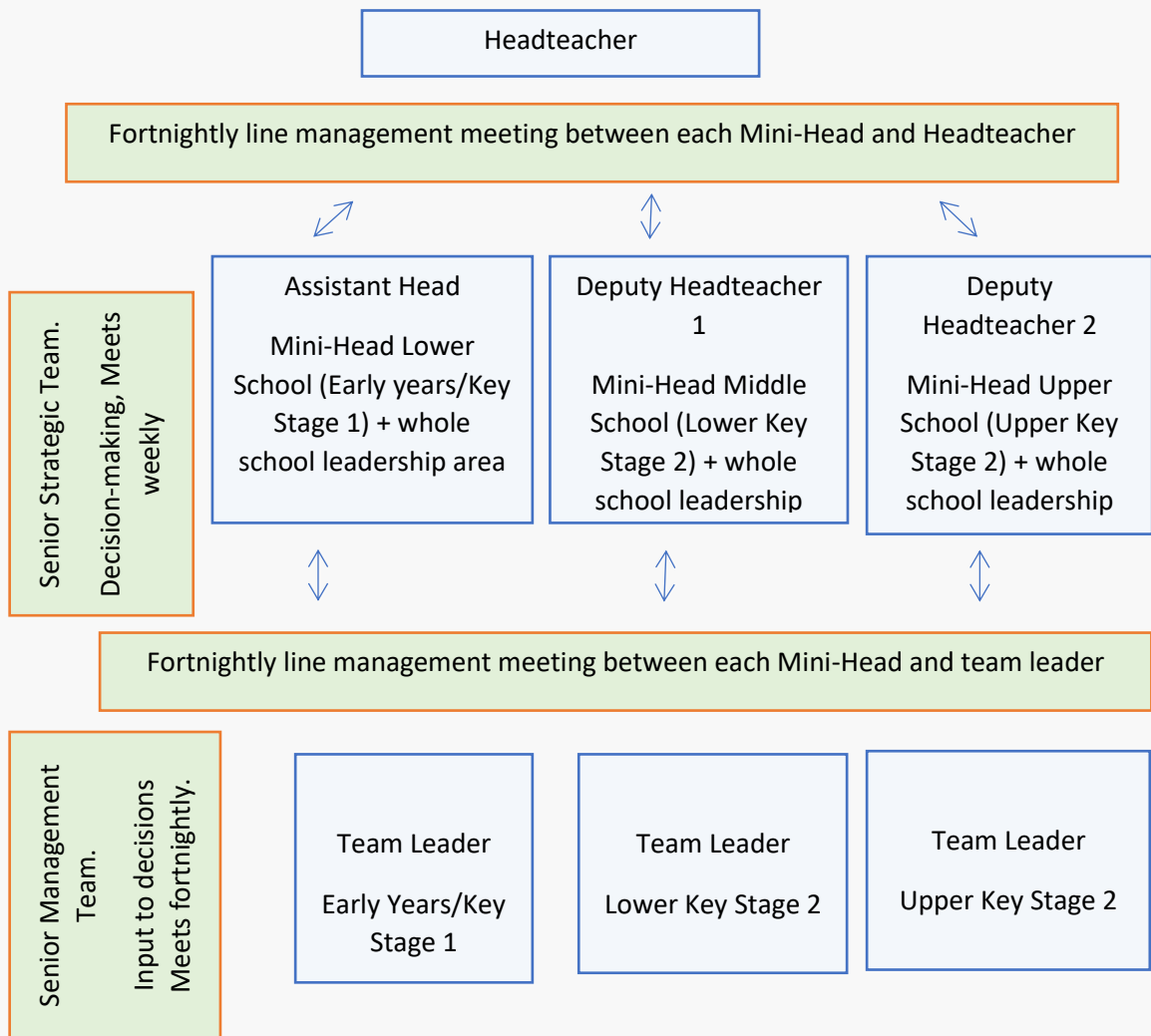
*I think we've gone to distributed leadership, as in Mini-Schools, this year.*

The prominence of Formal Distribution (MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse, 2004) was confirmed through the observation of a 1:1 Line Management meeting between a Mini-Head (SL2) and a Team Leader (ML1) which showed performance-based styles. In this meeting staff and pupils in each class were reviewed systematically. Where necessary support was planned, but this was mixed with accountability. Thus, ML1 commented:

*I went in and talked to them about their 1:1 boxes because even when the class teacher was there I don't think they're having time in the timetable (ML1, School 3).*

SL2 then outlined the procedures for returning to work, including going through the class teacher's responsibilities, again hinting at accountability.

**Figure 20: New leadership structure at School 3**



Formal hierarchical distribution was further evidenced in the way that school development priorities were led by the Headteacher, co-ordinated through Senior Strategic Team (SST)



meetings and fed down systematically to middle leaders and then teachers through the meeting structure.

*All that groundwork will get done [at SST] before we take it to SMT and to the teachers*  
(SL1, School 3)

Such highly formalised use of meetings and structures also equated to Additive Distribution in Harris' (2009a) model of DL.

Like MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse, (2004) Formal Hierarchical Distribution in School 3 reflected the fact that the Headteacher and senior leaders were all new to post. As in MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse's, (2004) model, the Headteacher had spent her first two years appraising the complex leadership situation. It also reflected her need to control that situation, as noted by Day *et al.* (2007).

*Basically, I found that we were spread too thin. There were also no clear lines of accountability. So, the lines of communication, delegation of tasks and the lines of accountability weren't there. So, what I did was, decided we needed to have a slightly different management structure, so I divided the school into three Mini-Schools and created three Mini-School Heads (Headteacher, School 3).*

She believed that the structure, with its focus on teams, would facilitate the further development of DL through a deeper pool of leadership which resonated with Leithwood's (2006) and Murphy *et al.*'s (2009) views on the role of Headteachers within DL.

The findings, however, did not support Jackson (2003, in Harris and Lambert, 2003), Hatcher (2005), Ritchie and Woods (2007) and Klein *et al.*'s (2018) assertion that hierarchies were barriers to DL. For example, ML1 commented,

*In my area I have quite a lot of freedom of responsibility as a team leader. I have to make snap decisions sometimes around staffing (ML1, School 3).*

This stance was also supported by the Headteacher of School 3 who expressed the desire to develop DL further.

Data from an SMT meeting observation confirmed that structures were used to promote DL and teamwork through consultative distribution (Day *et al.*, 2007) and aspects of consultative democratic distribution (Vroom and Yetton, 1973). In this meeting, leaders fed back from team groups, in which staff had been invited to identify areas for development which stemmed from a recent Workplace Survey. During the meeting, the Headteacher took on the role of facilitator, standing back from the main discussion and asked questions which enabled team members to clarify issues and reach decisions. For example, she asked:

*Did they give any examples of where that's happened?"*

*[Name of team leader], what do you think?*

(Headteacher, School 3)

The Headteacher also coached Senior and Middle leaders in her vision of empowering staff whilst holding them responsible for their actions. However, she was clear that there were limits to consultation: thus, in response to staff requests for greater involvement in staff movement between classes she coached,

*So, I guess consultation isn't always appropriate, but communication is* (Headteacher, School 3).

Issues around the limits of distribution will be considered in section 4.6 in relation to the role of the Headteacher.

Analysis of the data, using other models also indicated that the direction of travel in School 3 was towards a more deeply embedded DL. Using Ritchie and Woods (2007) typology the school presented as having Emerging Distribution on account of its hierarchical organisation, focus on formal roles, institutional distribution, high levels of control and top-down sources of development (Table 23, Appendix H). However, clear evidence of 6 out of 12 of Ritchie and Woods (2007) indicators of cultural distribution was found whilst others showed limited evidence. Similarly, the Headteacher's intentions were evidenced by the presence of aspects of MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse's, (2004) Phase 2 characterised by development and transformation, through the commissioning of bespoke leadership training to develop leadership and build teamwork. Finally, aspects of the Symbolic Frame of Telford's (1996) Collaborative Leadership were found in School 3, through language which reflected a shared ethos where participants spoke of 'The School 3 way' and referred to 'working alongsides' which was the school term for coaching (Table 24, Appendix H). All of this aligned with Lumby's (2019) acknowledgement that DL often operated within bureaucratic frameworks and resonated with Hairon and Goh's (2015) research on DL within bureaucracies. Above all, however, it supported Spillane's (2006) view that hierarchical structures, when seen in context, were not of necessity barriers to distribution.

### 4.3.2 The Case of School 1: Co-ordinated Distribution

School 1 was characterised by a hierarchical structure but had a stronger affinity with MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse's (2004) Incremental Distribution within Phase 2 of their model, which focused on development and transformation. This was reflected in the encouragement of TL (4.7.3).

The use of meetings in School 1 indicated high levels of empowerment and co-ordinated practice. These reflected elements of Harris' (2009a) Autonomous and Additive Distribution, being tightly structured but deeply co-ordinated. This was evidenced in the observation of an SMT meeting, which included the Headteacher, senior and middle leaders. In embarking on a new project, concerning the development of a parent forum on pupil reporting, the Headteacher made the initial strategic decision, but then invited input from the group on how this would work. Nevertheless, he gave clear guidance:

*So, your thoughts really. I'm really interested in what people think about - Who? Which parents and why? But also, about our ability to adjust or the new academic year in terms of: Are we going to report more? Or less? How much are we going to change what we report? Do we want to do things like that? Who really wants to start?*

(Headteacher, School 1).

The discussion that followed was open and reflected a culture based on strong relationships (Spillane, 2006) where difference was accepted which Danielson (2006) saw as facilitating DL. As such it reflected Woods' (2016, p.15) concept of 'power with' in which power was in 'perpetual construction' through the concepts of community and democratic authority. This was evident when ML1 questioned the value of producing more data, that would need

explanation, but went on to suggest creating more child centred reviews as an alternative. In identifying parents' names, some suggestions were respectfully declined because individuals already had a voice through membership of other bodies. This showed the Headteacher's role in co-ordinating and validating decisions (Woods, 2016). Middle leaders' reasons for identifying parents also influenced the course of the discussion and built on each other's ideas. For example,

*I think into every group there has to be somebody who's slightly more challenging. I think to be involved in a group like that may give [name of parent] the voice that she needs and may also give her feedback from other families (ML2, School 1).*

The Deputy Head took up this line of reasoning, suggested parents and commented:

*I think it could possibly help us to shape relationships and may be good for her to hear from parents who are not as disappointed as she is (Deputy Headteacher, School 1).*

The findings from School 1 also resonate with Ritchie and Woods (2007) Embedded Distribution through high degrees of spontaneous, informal and bottom-up leadership, typified by the high profile of TL in the school. Data summarised in Table 23 (Appendix H) supports this showing strong evidence of cultural distribution against all 12 indicators. A similar picture of high levels of Collaborative Leadership was indicated using Telford's (1996) model as shown in Table 24 (Appendix H). The depth with which the culture of collaboration was embedded was indicated by TL2 who commented on 'the School 1 way', which was part of school language and equated with Telford's (1996) Symbolic Frame.

### 4.3.3 The Case of School 2: Organic Distribution

DL in School 2 resembled MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse's (2004) Cultural Distribution, within Phase 3 of their model, as indicated in Table 4. This was supported by data from an *ad hoc* staffing meeting observation, set up by the Headteacher following an SMT meeting, in which SL1, met with TL1 and TL2, to agree their responsibilities as new Assistant Heads in September, and support-staff placements. SL1 checked that she had understood correctly, from the SMT meeting, that TL1 and TL2 would be managing Senior Teacher Assistants (STAs) across the school. However, a difference of understanding emerged. SL1 was happy to accept that the two Assistant Heads may have more information than herself about changes to their role, which reflected the 'fluid and organic' mode of Harris' (2009a, p.259) Autonomous Distribution and Danielson's (2006) view that ability to accept difference was the most important aspect of school culture, in enabling DL. Supporting this interpretation, SL1 commented,

*So, I think between the three of us we can work it out, so we do this thing and we do it together (SL1. School 2).*

This also echoed Wood's (2016) democratic and community authorities and showed an overall balance towards 'power with' through collaborative processes. Additionally, it supported Harris' (2003a) view that DL involved a redistribution of power and realignment of authority within schools and resonated with Jackson's view (p. xvii, in Harris and Lambert, 2003) that leadership was given by those being led, rather than imposed or assumed, as part of what he described as 'a reciprocal and dynamic' relationship.

**Table 4: Cultural distribution of leadership in School 2 based on MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse, (2004)**

Evidence of Cultural Distribution (MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse, 2004)	Data source
Flat staffing structure. Strong shared ethos focused on needs of child, which Headteacher maintains as driving force for school. Senior teaching assistants initiate setting up of NVQ centre. Headteacher is happy to follow as well as lead, taking feeding instructions from teaching assistants. Headteacher has no difficulty in 'letting go' (MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse, 2004).	Interview HT Interviews all staff  Interview HT Interview TL1  Interview HT

However, School 2, also reflected MacBeath's (2005) view that schools could change from one method of distribution to another, similar to Gronn's (2009a) Hybrid Distribution: thus, it contained elements of Pragmatic Distribution, based on individual expertise, which was shown when the Headteacher, asked ML1 and the Assistant Head for Outreach (AHO) to work with him on drawing up a response to the Rochford Review (STA, 2016).

Ritchie and Woods (2007) model of cultural distribution showed a similar analysis of DL in School 2. This tool identified DL to be 'Embedded' showing strong evidence of all 12 indicators combined with a non- hierarchical structure, high degrees of autonomy, spontaneity and autonomy (Table 23, Appendix H).

Finally, many elements of Telford's (1996) collaborative leadership were evident in School 2 (Table 5). A few elements did not reflect Telford's model, notably the existence of sub-groups amongst support staff, as identified by Stoll and Fink (1996) which TL1 described as 'cliquey', that emerged through anxieties over the opening of a second school site. On this occasion the

Headteacher and SL1 worked hard to sustain the nature of distribution through staff engagement in line with MacBeath’s (2005) Cultural Distribution.

**Table 5: Collaborative distribution of leadership in School 2 based on Telford (1996)**

Evidence of Collaborative Leadership	Frame (Telford, 1996)	Data source
Shared vision around the child was fully ‘institutionalised’ Sergiovanni and Sharratt (1988, p.213)	Symbolic Frame	All interviewees
Team support each other and communicate openly in reviewing Development plan. Focus on teaching and learning.	Human resources	Outreach observation
Flat staffing structure. Senior leadership team. nly one middle leader.	Structural Frame	HT interview
Consensual nature of leadership	Political Frame	TL3
All pervasive nature of culture: school is ‘another country’	Symbolic Frame	TL2

#### 4.3.4 Summary

In seeking to develop a model of distribution, several key themes emerged whose existence was common to, but different within, each of the schools. These themes were as follows:

- Mechanisms and extent of empowerment.
- School context.
- The role of the Headteacher and DL.
- School culture and core values.
- Collaboration and TL.

The data in relation to these themes will be analysed in the following sections, to shed light on the different manifestations of DL in each school. Additionally, the role of complex student



needs, which is embedded within these themes as part of the special school context, will be reviewed.

#### 4.4. Mechanisms and Extent of Empowerment

*Different mechanisms of empowerment: formal and informal.*

*Use of routines: meetings and workshops.*

*Different levels of empowerment.*

The variety of mechanisms for empowerment and levels of empowerment, within each school will be analysed in this section. Data for this came from question 3a in which participants were asked about how much freedom they had to make decisions and take initiatives in their area of formal responsibility (Table 6) and in question 3b regarding their input into leadership beyond their area (Table 7).

**Table 6: Thematic matrix showing levels and patterns of empowerment in areas of formal responsibility.**

Participants						
Schools	HT	SLs	MLs	TLs	Main themes	Broad cross-school themes
School 1	Staff have autonomy to interpret the vision. May involve taking risks for HT.	Trust and empowerment add to job satisfaction.	Lots of freedom – manages own diary. Developed training module through own initiative because needed.	Free to support peers through intensive interaction training and coaching. Freedom is a strength.	Trusted and empowered to develop own area by interpreting the vision.	<b>Empowerment and high degrees of autonomy based on trust and good relationships which is ethically bounded through the Headteacher and collaboration with peers.</b>
	Leaders keep HT informed and come to him with bigger	Checks in / runs ideas by the HT as part of a good working	Always check ideas with the HT.		Leader’s work is co-ordinated by HT with leaders	

	decisions/queries based on good relationships.	relationship. Unlikely the HT will say no.			checking in based on good relationship.	
	HT puts 'red lines' in place if something is going in the wrong direction.	Accountability is a positive critical conversation which is developmental.	Bounces ideas off team members and carries out research	Must have a good reason for what you want to do. Peers advise.	Accountability, is developmental and led by HT, but also peers.	
School 2	It is staff's jobs to make decisions.	Feels she has absolute freedom; HT trusts her. HT declines to look at paperwork when asked if he'd like to check.	HT has given free rein to develop her MSI work as expert.	Has a lot of freedom.	Empowerment, autonomy and trust are part of staff's job.	
		Runs new ideas by the head. He needs to know what's happening because he is the 'boss.'		Runs new initiatives in her class by the head.	Leaders check new ideas with the head .	
	HT will say no on ethical grounds, but it is very rare. Senior managers are responsible for holding staff accountable. Staff have to work collaboratively with peers in making decisions.	HT has the final say. Feels she has responsibility in collaboration with team.	Staff expected to follow protocols. Checks decisions with her team.	Staff expected to manage their class teams.	HT will say no on ethical grounds. Staff also accountable through teams, peers and protocols.	
School 3	Staff trusted to make decisions that are underpinned by school ethos.	SLs are encouraged to generate and research new ideas	ML free to manage teachers.		Empowered and trusted within boundaries of school ethos	<b>Empowerment based on trust which is ethically bounded by the Headteacher through line-management accountability systems and collaboration with peers</b>
	Leaders run ideas past line managers in 1:1 meeting.	Freedom in consultation with others. New ideas need to be presented to HT and SST.	Trust goes hand in hand with responsibility based on relationships.	Makes decisions in collaboration with therapists.	Leaders check new ideas through line managers, peers and therapists.	
	HT likes to know. Informed systemically through line management meetings.	Held accountable through fortnightly line management meetings in a 'line of trust'.	Accountable through 1:1 fortnightly line management meeting.		Staff held closely accountable through structure.	

#### 4.4.1 Empowerment through Formal Roles

Empowerment through formal roles was evident in all schools. All Headteachers and leaders, reported high levels of freedom to make decisions and take initiatives in areas of formal responsibility, with numerous examples being cited (Table 6). As indicated earlier (4.3.1) this included School 3 where hierarchical structures dominated. Typical of this was SLTh in School 1 who commented:

*Lots of freedom. Myself and the family worker have set up a siblings group, which was just something that was highlighted as we do a lot of home visits.*

School 2, however, stood out for the high levels of autonomy amongst staff as identified in section 4.3.3. This was illustrated in the way in which two incoming Assistant Heads were empowered by the Headteacher to create their own job descriptions:

*They're both new, and I said, I don't care who does what, but here's my big list of things that will need to be done in the next academic year. Decide amongst yourselves who is doing what (Headteacher, School 2).*

The role of trust in empowering staff (Muijs and Harris, 2006; Harris, 2014), the role of the Headteacher in establishing an ethical framework (Fullan, 2001) and mechanisms for accountability through the Headteacher and collaboration with peers, were also raised and will be considered in looking at the role of the Headteacher (4.6), with data from this question serving to triangulate that evidence.

#### 4.4.2 Input into Whole-School Issues through Routines

**Table 7: Thematic matrix showing mechanisms for empowerment**

Participants						
Schools	HT	SLs	MLs	TLs	Main themes	Broad cross-school themes
School 1	HT gives 'direction of travel' through SMT and invites debate	Gives departmental views through SMT.	Inputs and makes decisions as group through SMT.		Group input to decision-making through scheduled meetings.	<b>Scheduled Routines</b> Role of scheduled meetings, working groups and events. Individuals input through informal channels.
				Input to targets on assessment database through teacher working group.	Group Input through scheduled working groups.	
				Shares expertise through training	Individual input through scheduled event	
School 2	Fortnightly staff meetings for all staff				Group input through scheduled meetings	
	All staff input into school improvement plan through SIP groups.	Input through SIP groups and <i>ad hoc</i> groups.		SIP groups give a voice to staff.	Group input through scheduled working groups.	
	Support staff initiated and led development of school as a training centre through conversation with HT				Individual informal input through HT.	
School 3	SMT involves staff in decision-making	Input through Senior Strategic Team.	New ideas brought to SMT.	Head listens to suggestions for improvement through teacher meetings.	Group input through scheduled meetings.	
	Would like to get more input but there have been time constraints due to restructuring.	Some areas are not for debate.	Ideas taken on board by senior leaders.	Teacher leader set up pre- staff meetings to encourage input from quieter staff.	Developing understanding of channels and areas of input.	

Formal leaders in all schools identified that teachers were empowered to input into wider whole school change and development through regular routines (Muijs and Harris, 2003) which were put in place by the Headteacher as part of the school structure (Murphy *et al.*, 2009), such as SMT meetings, Key Stage meetings or whole-staff meetings. The Headteacher's role was directly reflected by ML2 in School 1:

*Through our SMT meetings, we discuss what the agenda is, what the most important things are, and the Head would ask us what we think about certain areas for development for the school and then we would go off, do a little research and then we will come back to the table and will say, 'Right. This is what we think. And then make a decision as a group.*

This was confirmed by the SMT meeting observation referenced in section 4.3.2. Staff were also empowered to input into whole school issues through working groups, which again were set up by Headteachers. In School 2 this took the form of School Improvement (SIP) Groups which were referred to by all participants. This reflected Harris' (2009a) deeply co-ordinated practice, with staff free to choose their group.

*It does mean that everybody in school feels, as if they will have an impact upon the changes that are happening (Headteacher, School 2).*

In a similar fashion, in School 1, SL1 described how formal and informal leaders collaborated, as equals, through an all-teacher working group, in developing a new assessment system, with his role being supportive, empowering, enabling and co-ordinating which reflected Jackson's view (foreword to Harris and Lambert, 2003) of senior managers as liberating leadership, and Harris' (2004) view that leadership could be exercised by anybody based on expertise.

*Leadership is not about something that happens at the top and cascades down. A leader can exist anywhere. Anybody can be a leader. And a big part I think of being a good leader is the empowerment of others, to fulfil their potential, to have drive and ambition...I think more often than not I'm interested in trying to meet as two equal people along the lines of, let's co-construct something rather than leading from the directing perspective. It's almost as if I'm supporting you, leading you to your own answer or conclusion or delivering whatever it is you're looking to do (SL1, School 1).*

In School 2, DL often took a more unstructured form of collaboration, resonating with the cultural nature of distribution identified earlier, and resembling Peters (2002, cited in Billingsley, 2007, p.167) 'school-as-a- whole' process for decision-making. This was reflected by SL2:

*I do think it's [DL] something that we've done in a quite an unstructured way here, because there are a lot of little things that we do. For example, when we redeveloped the playground here, we had a working group of people who were across the whole spectrum of people who worked here.*

In all schools, teacher leaders input into whole school development through individual initiatives, although this was most pronounced in Schools 1 and 2, where individual and group input was integrated. For example, ML1 in School 2 passed some ideas from a student teacher about pupil profiles to the Headteacher which led to the development of a new system.

#### **4.4.3 Summary**

Leadership was distributed through a variety of mechanisms (Muijs and Harris, 2003) which reflected areas of commonality within a spectrum of practice, as well as different levels of

empowerment in whole school issues. The significance of these differences will be considered in the following sections. Firstly, differences were underpinned by the context of each school (Spillane, 2006) which will be discussed in section 4.5, secondly, by the role of the Headteacher (section 4.6) and thirdly by the culture of each school (section 4.7).

#### **4.5 Centrality of School Context**

*Context of the school situation) and career paths of headteacher and leadership group impacts on nature of DL*

In this section the career path of headteachers and leaders, the impact of the growth of pupil numbers and current changes and developments within each school, will be discussed in considering the impact of school context on the nature of DL, which the literature (MacBeath, 2005; Danielson, 2006; Spillane, 2006; Torrance, 2013; Klar *et al.*, 2016) contends underpins the way in which it is manifested. This data will then be considered in relation to the model of distribution set out in section 4.3. In question 1, participants were asked about themselves and their role in school. This provided rich data about the context of each school.

##### **4.5.1 Length of Tenure and Career Path of the Headteacher**

The Headteacher of each school had had a different career path within their school (Table 8). All had been promoted internally from the role of deputy head. However, all had been in the school for different periods of time, had different lengths of experience as headteacher, had different relationships with the previous head and inherited different situations. In School 1 the Headteacher had been in post for three years but had worked closely with the previous head which resulted in a continuity of values:

*I joined the school as deputy in January 2011 and became head in September 2015. The previous Headteacher and I worked together, and I knew her well. And I knew in the December 2014 that I was going to be the Head, so we had a long handover (Headteacher School 1).*

In School 2 the Head came to the school as deputy when it opened and worked closely with the previous head in developing its vision, until he was promoted to headteacher.

*I've been headteacher for, it must be 12 years I think because I've been here for 22 years. I was previously the deputy (Headteacher School 2).*

In School 3, the Headteacher had been deputy for two years when she became headteacher. However, unlike the Headteacher of School 1 she took on completely new and inexperienced senior and middle management teams, who had been internally promoted, when the previous established head and other deputy had retired at the same time.

*So that was really challenging in terms of a whole new senior management team all at once. So that's been a bit a journey for the last two years, in terms of trying to ensure that everybody developed into the roles and developed their understanding of leadership and we as a team started to work together and gelled together (Headteacher School 3).*

Thus, the career history of the Headteacher in relation to other aspects of school context, was seen to underpin school culture and the nature of distribution (MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse, 2004) and reflected Gronn's (2009a) hybrid distribution.



**Table 8: Thematic matrix showing tenure and career path of headteachers and senior leaders**

Participants						
Schools	HT	SLs	MLs	TLs	Main themes	Broad cross-school themes
School 1	HT 3 years in post. Previously deputy for 2 years.	SLs in post between 3 and 20 years. Progressed in careers in school.	Began as TA in school. Trained as teacher through school.	TL1 began as NQT 5 years ago. TL2 joined as TA; trained as a teacher through school.	Continuity between HT and previous HT. Leaders develop and progress careers within school.	<b>Stability of leadership:</b> Development of leaders within school and continuity of Headship and leaders.
School 2	HT 11-12 years in post; previously deputy for 12 years.	Deputy Head: 12 years in post. Assistant Head 22 years in post since school opened.	Worked 20 years as adviser to school, then 5 years directly.	TLs have worked between 5 and 22 years.	Long standing, HT and leadership team.	
School 3	HT came to school as Deputy Head 3 years ago. Two years ago, became HT.	Both SLs came to school as class teachers and developed skills through career progression in school. Both new to leadership roles.	Came to school as a Learning Support Assistant. Got new skills through role. New to leadership role.	Began as student teacher; progressed to English and PECS co-ordinator.	HT two years in post. Leaders are longstanding members of staff and have progressed 'through the ranks' but are all new to current post.	<b>Change in leadership teams:</b> Development of leaders within school, but all leaders new to post.

#### 4.5.2 Length of Tenure and Career Path of Senior and Middle Leaders

Senior leaders in all schools, except for SL1 in School 1, had either been in post or worked in the school for over 10 years (Table 8). In School 2, length of service was much longer across all groups of leaders, with many having been in place since the establishment of the school

and seen as influential in building school culture by TL3. This reflects the role of staff stability in relation to school culture as an important aspect of context (Spillane, 2006).

#### 4.5.3 Growth of Pupil Numbers

**Table 9: Impact of school growth**

	School 1	School 2	School 3
Growth in pupil numbers in past 10 years	54-237	76-201	130-191
Growth/issues in provision	Development of 4 offsite bases. Residential provision	Becoming split site school in September.	Development of an off-site satellite base. Inadequate building capacity.

All schools were going through a significant growth in pupil numbers (Table 9), which mirrored the growing population of pupils with CLDD identified by Carpenter *et al.* (2011). This was perceived by all groups of participants, as presenting challenges through changes to their roles, and all felt that it would be impossible to manage the volume and complexity of their workload and be effective, without distributing leadership, as recognised by Klein *et al.* (2018). School growth brought additional challenges such as changing accommodation needs as well as being a potential threat to maintaining the core ethos of the school through rapid staff growth. This was typified by SL2 in School 1 who commented,

*I would say in the past, when we were much smaller, we were all like a family (SL2, School 1).*

Similarly, in School 3 the influx of new staff was seen to impact negatively on relationships and led to changes in the staffing structure. Whilst in School 2 the move to a split site caused anxieties amongst a close-knit staff. On a positive note, in School 1, it was recognised as presenting new career opportunities. This again reflected the impact of changing circumstances on the nature of distribution (MacBeath, 2005; Gronn, 2009a).

#### 4.5.4 Other Changes and Developments

**Table 10: Summary of major changes and developments in each school.**

Schools	Major changes and development
<b>School 1</b>	Research and development through teacher leadership in partnership with university.
	Review of Assessment System.
<b>School 2</b>	Change to become a split site school.
	Development of Soft Federation.
	Review of Assessment System.
<b>School 3</b>	Introduction of new school structure: Mini-Schools
	Review of Assessment System.

All schools were going through other significant changes, as summarised in Table 10. This is presented here to provide an overview of change in each school as this formed another important part of the context through which leadership took place (Spillane, 2006) and impacted on the nature of DL. Some of these changes have already been referenced, while others will be discussed in relation to key themes throughout this chapter.

#### 4.5.5 Impact of Context on the Nature of Distributed Leadership

Using Spillane's (2006) model of DL, which focuses on the interaction between leaders, followers and the situation, the above contexts played a central role in determining the nature

of DL in each school. Thus, in School 3 the interplay between the complex scenario inherited by the Headteacher (the situation), the career path of the newly appointed headteacher and inexperienced senior and middle leaders (leaders) combined with an influx of new staff (followers) supported the understanding of Formal Hierarchical Distribution.

Whilst, in School 1, the interplay between rapid school growth and the opening of new sites, which required careful co-ordination (the situation), the career path of the Headteacher, who was in the early years of Headship, but had served with the previous headteacher (leaders), and the commitment of staff to firmly established values (followers), supported the understanding of Co-ordinated Distribution.

Finally, in School 2 the interplay between the small size of the school (situation) which supported close relationships and shared ethos between long serving staff (followers) and the career path of the Headteacher and leaders who were long-serving and had been instrumental in developing a collaborative and consensual culture, with high levels of trust, (Muijs and Harris, 2006), and positive relationships (Spillane, 2006) under the previous headteacher (leaders) supported the understanding of Organic Distribution. The findings, however, did not support Harris' (2011) view that longer standing headteachers would find change to their role as exclusive leaders challenging and seemed to stem from embedded partnership working in school culture and special education. This will be discussed in section 4.7.

#### **4.5.6 Summary**

While context emerged as a key theme in determining the nature of distribution, other themes were referenced which will be considered fully in later sections. Thus, the role of the Headteacher will be considered in the next section, and the practice of schools growing their

own leaders will be considered in relation to the development of leadership in others by headteachers. It will be argued in section 4.7 that this practice, along with collaborative cultures and TL, also relates to the growing population of pupils with complex needs within the schools.

#### 4.6 The Role of the Headteacher

*Power and empowerment: As strategic leaders, heads share power and decision-making with senior teams. They distribute responsibilities and inspire leaders, whilst reserving the right of veto. Accountability through formal and informal processes based on supportive relationships.*

In this section issues of power and empowerment, balanced with school accountability, will be discussed as part of the role of the Headteacher. An important part of this discussion will focus on the development of leadership in others in relation to complex pupil needs. In question 4 each participant was asked how they saw the role of the Headteacher in leading their school. Data is summarised in Table 11. In question 5 each participant was asked about how they perceived the role of the Headteacher in developing leadership in others. Data is summarised in Table 13.

**Table 11: Thematic matrix showing the role of the Headteacher.**

Participants						
Schools	HT	SLs	MLs	TLs	Main themes	Broad cross-school themes
School 1	Visions and co-ordinates developments. Champions the cause of young people with autism. Delegates responsibilities.	HT embodies the vision, making ethical decisions. The driving-force.	Inspires staff to excellence. Makes executive decisions. Builds the ethos, passion, and love for the pupils.		Strategy and moral purpose.	<p><b>Power and empowerment</b> (As strategic leaders, heads share power and decision-making with senior teams. They distribute responsibilities and inspire leaders, whilst reserving the right of veto. Accountability through formal and informal processes based on a supportive relationship)</p>
	Senior team can initiate strategy. Head reserves the right to say 'no'. There are 'red lines' but he allows leaders room to personalise their role.	Head and deputies are closely aligned and involved in strategic thinking.	Head makes decisions and other leaders implement.		Power sharing with senior team. Sets limits of empowerment.	
	Head feels accountable to staff because of their commitment.	Head is ultimately accountable. Staff not negatively held to account as long all is well. Does performance management and pupil progress reviews with all teachers. Does lesson observations.	Observes lessons to ensure high standards.	Annual pupil progress review with head.	Mutual accountability through formal processes.	
	Keeps in touch by seeing pupils arrive and leave each day.	Always supports with challenging situations. Open door policy. Very approachable	Can always go to Head for advice. Will step in if needed. Listens to staff. A friendly leader. Trusted by staff.	Very approachable. Makes expectations clear.	Supportive relationship	

School 2	<p>Role has changed. Is less involved with staff and distributes line management roles. Has no difficulty letting go because of good trust. Gives high degree of autonomy based on expertise.</p>	<p>Head empowers because of workload.</p>		<p>Head trusts staff to get on with their work. He respects professionalism of staff.</p>	<p>Empowerment and trust.</p>
	<p>People approach head when 'stuck'. Co-ordinates and makes sure staff are doing their job.</p>	<p>Head has open door policy for staff.</p>	<p>Listens to staff. Makes time for everybody. 'Soft approach to leadership'. Knows what is happening in school through presence around the building.</p>	<p>Open door policy so staff can seek advice.</p>	<p>Support and accountability through informal processes.</p>
	<p>Head identifies strategic direction and involves others in inputting in their area based on expertise. Sets strategic direction in partnership with leadership team</p>	<p>Head makes decisions, taking on board what senior leaders and staff say. SMT input into ideas. Head makes decisions 'at the end of the day'. Senior leaders can challenge. Head has the vision for the school.</p>		<p>Head works in a consensual way. Brings changes to SMT and teachers but makes clear that at the end of the day it's his decision.</p>	<p>Strategic direction in collaboration with other leaders. Head makes decisions ultimately.</p>
School 3	<p>Setting strategic direction. Has become more strategic. Built team ethos through bespoke training.</p>	<p>Steers the direction and is the driving force.</p>	<p>Makes the bigger decisions.</p>	<p>Has a strong vision for the school and 'puts on her stamp'. Responsible for big decisions.</p>	<p>Strategy and direction setting.</p>

	Head is the conductor of the orchestra. Relies on others to feed into, and shape ideas, and support that direction.	Shares vision with SST and they input. Head and SLs listen to each other to make decisions, but Head will be directive if necessary. Works beside staff to find their vision for their part of the school.	Invites and listens to input through SMT. Sometimes will take that on board and sometimes will not, 'that's ultimately what a head needs to do.'		Collaboration with other leaders. Can be directive and reject ideas from leaders.
			Has been proactive in improving staff well-being through structured analysis and training.	Fair and approachable. Knows the children.	Supportive Relationships

#### 4.6.1 Strategic and Moral Leader

Participants in all schools were clear that what set the role of the Headteacher aside from leaders was that he/she set the values and moral purpose of the school that inspired staff. Typical of this was ML1 in School 2 who commented,

*It's the fact that it's the well-being of the children that comes first and foremost of everything and he does keep you focused on that (ML1, School 2).*

Similarly, ML1 in School 1 stated that the Headteacher 'inspires us to excellence.' Whilst the Headteacher of School 3 was actively engaged in building school culture, which Schein (1985), Murphy *et al.* (2009) and Fullan (2001) considered to be one of the fundamental tasks of a Headteacher. This also reflected Rossman, Corbett and Firestone's (1988) concept of transformative cultural change. The Headteacher described how she used bespoke leadership



training to develop teamwork and promote relationships, particularly within small Key Stage groups and classes. This culture building process, was also evidenced in an SMT meeting where the Head gave a moral steer towards the group in guiding them to agree an achievable deadline for their response to staff around a Workplace Survey, suggesting a recognition of the need to build trust within empowerment.

Additionally, all participants perceived the Headteacher to be responsible for setting out the vision as contended by Murphy *et al.* (2009). Headteachers supported this view and reflected Copland's (2003) and Hairon and Goh's (2015) findings, that other leaders fed into and shared that vision using their expertise, as described by the Headteacher of School 3.

*The strategic direction...., I cannot do everything and be the expert of everything, so you are relying on other people for feeding into that and shaping your ideas and supporting you in moving things forward in a direction (Headteacher, School 3).*

#### **4.6.2 Power and Empowerment: Headteachers empower others, determine the extent of distribution and retain a right of veto**

Leaders, such as SL1 at School 2, considered that the source of their empowerment sat with the Headteacher, which aligned with Torrance's (2013 p.355) view that DL lay in 'the gift of the Headteacher'. Supporting this view, the Headteacher of School 1 spoke of 'delegation', which Jackson (2003, in Harris and Lambert, 2003) and Hatcher (2005) associated with power-based relationships.

In all schools headteachers identified limits to empowerment. This was shown by the way that they reserved the right to 'say no', which again suggested power-based relationships. Headteachers were also observed to 'pull rank', as described by Wallace (2001) in meetings

when decisions were made. For example, in an SMT observation in School 2, the Headteacher made it clear, when discussing support staff placements, that any decision must be in line with his views.

Headteachers also determined the extent of distribution. This differed between schools and has been argued (4.5) to relate to the length of time each head had been in post, raising the importance of context as contended by Spillane (2006) and MacBeath (2005). Thus, in School 2, where the Headteacher had been in post for 12 years supported by a stable team, he commented:

*I don't find that [letting go] difficult, I have to say. And the trust gets easier as you work with the person or you have to deal with the fact that you can't trust them*  
(Headteacher, School 2).

In so doing he highlighted an issue that MacBeath (2005) saw as difficult for some headteachers. By contrast, in School 3, whilst being in the process of increasing levels of empowerment, the Headteacher still kept a close check through the line management structure.

Teachers in Schools 1 and 2 also checked-in with the Headteacher before undertaking a new initiative. This was the case in School 2 where TL1 was empowered to introduce 'sensology' into her class having detailed what was involved to the Headteacher. The practice of checking-in seemed to reinforce the view, using Lumby's (2019) definition of power, as the ability to achieve desired outcomes, that power in the final analysis, resided with the Headteacher. This matched the bounded empowerment Hairon and Goh (2015) found to be common in their study. However, the Headteacher at School 1 made it clear that the practice of checking-in,

particularly over significant decisions, was initiated by staff and based on good relationships. This chimed with Jackson 's view (in Harris and Lambert, 2003) that leadership was conferred by followers rather than imposed, thereby challenging this power-based relationship.

As well as checking-in with the Headteacher, when making decisions, leaders consulted with peers. In School 2, ML1, recounted an incident where she assessed a child for an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP), but was unsure whether the child was well enough for school. Rather than make the decision alone, she took on board the views of other team members. She felt able to do this because of the high levels of trust and professional integrity within the team.

Finally, in School 2 teachers were able to make their own decisions, as related by ML1 and the Headteacher, by gauging whether an initiative was in line with the school ethos and protocols which were shared with staff, reflecting Telford's (1996) collaborative leadership.

All of this suggested a more complex relationship around power and empowerment which related to the career path of the Headteacher and leaders, which in turn impacted on school culture and relationships. The significance of time in post for headteachers, in this context, was captured by ML1 in School 2 who saw empowerment as being synonymous with responsibility based on relationships and observed,

*Trust goes hand in hand with responsibility based on relationships built over time.*

These issues were referenced in section 4.5, when considering the centrality of context, and will be considered more fully in relation to culture in section 4.7.

### 4.6.3 The Headteacher as Co-ordinator

Headteachers in all schools saw themselves as co-ordinators, as described by Harris (2004), MacBeath (2005) and Woods (2016). This was reflected by the Headteacher of School 3:

*As headteacher, you're almost like the conductor of the orchestra.*

The Headteacher of School 1 evidenced this view in relation to the development of TL, where he saw his role as checking that peer mentoring was in line with school ethos and strategic direction. This chimes with Jackson's (in Harris and Lambert, 2003) view of the purpose of DL as the liberation of leadership in others which heads aligned towards a common purpose. It also supported Gronn's view (2000), to some degree, that leadership can be separated from power, and by implication, as asserted by MacBeath (2005), that DL entailed some loss of power on the part of the Headteacher with a repositioning of the role.

### 4.6.4 Accountability, Empowerment, and Supportive Relationships: Potentially Conflicting Roles

Headteachers were aware of the risks of empowerment within DL, in view of their accountability for school performance, which echoed Wallace (2001) Storey (2004) and Hatcher's (2005) research. The Headteacher of School 1 identified this dilemma commenting,

*I know that ultimately, I'm accountable. I have to be aware of and have to somehow oversee. Sometimes I think you have to take risks as well.*

In reducing these risks leaders described how staff were held to account, through performance management systems and other processes which varied in degree of formality. Formal checking and accountability, through structures and routines, was evident in School 3

where the Headteacher, senior and middle leaders described fortnightly line management meetings. In Schools 1 and 2, however, accountability was seen to be supportive and was often informal. This was evidenced by ML1 in School2 who described how the Headteacher had an intimate knowledge of the school gained by his daily presence around the building. This 'soft approach' enabled him to discipline where necessary, but was seen as supportive by staff, evidencing high levels of trust.

These positive relationships and support offered by headteachers underpinned DL in all schools. Words used to describe the Headteacher in School 1 included *open, amenable, kind, approachable* and *friendly*. Similarly, in School 3 the Headteacher was described as *fair* and *approachable*. In School 2, all participants stated that the head had an 'open door' policy and that he expected the same of all leaders. This was an important part of school ethos and was in line with Schein (1985, p.2, cited in Stoll and Fink, 1996, p.82), Muijs and Harris, (2006), Murphy *et al.* (2009) and Brundrett and Rhodes (2014), who recognised the importance of the Headteacher in developing supportive cultures characterised by positive relationships based on trust, both between staff and between staff and Senior Leaders.

#### **4.6.5 Accountability: Government Policy versus Pupil Needs.**

Whilst all headteachers were aware of the pressures of external accountability, as indicated in the last section, pupil needs, rather than government policy, were perceived by all groups of leaders in all three schools as the dominant driver of school improvement (Table 12).

**Table 12: Summary of drivers for change and development**

		Participants				Overview	
Schools	Drivers for change	HT	SLs	MLs	TLs	Major drivers	Minor drivers
School 1	Pupil needs	1	2		1	Pupil needs.	Desire to improve.  Inspections.
	Inspections		1	1			
	Parents		1				
	Rising role		1				
	Research			1			
	Desire to improve			1	1		
	Needs of community		1				
School 2	Pupil needs	1	2	1	3	Pupil needs  Statutory requirements.	Staff interests
	Statutory requirements	1	2	1	3		
	Ofsted	1					
	School identified areas	1					
	Desire to improve			1			
	Staff interests and input	1	1				
School 3	Pupil needs, safety and outcomes	1	2	1	1	Pupil needs, safety and outcomes.	Government policy.
	Government policy	1	2	1	1		
	Local authority policy		1				
	Budgets			1			

This stance was typified by the Headteacher of School 1 who commented,

*Definitely not government policy. Definitely not national policy. I think in the field of autism we are lucky that we can have a little bit of an escape from all of that. My business manager says, 'All schools must do this.' I say, 'Actually, no! We're not taking part because it's important for our children's needs to come first'* (Headteacher, School 1).

This focus aligned with the centrality of pupil needs and well-being in underpinning moral purpose identified earlier (4.6.1). It also hinted at the challenge posed by the growth of pupil numbers with complex needs (Baker, 2009; Carpenter *et al.*, 2011), which formed part of each school's context (4.5.3). The importance of pupil needs in relation to DL therefore reflects a key finding which will be discussed further in relation to collaboration and TL (4.7.3) and the practice of internal leadership development (4.6.7)

These views stood in contrast to the swathe of literature (Wright, 2003; Hatcher, 2005; Fitzgerald and Gunter, 2006; Hartley, 2007; Hargreaves and Fink, 2008; Murphy *et al.*, 2009; Klein *et al.*, 2018;) which saw DL as a way of delivering top-down policies and supporting managerialism. Moreover, Table 12 showed a commitment to an authentic DL through the secondary drivers of improvement, namely, the desire for constant improvement (School 1) and staff expertise (School 2). This did not tally with Currie, Lockett and Suhomlinova's (2009, p.1753) view that government-imposed accountability on Headteachers led to a 'weak' or less authentic form of DL, used to secure compliance from staff. Nevertheless, increasing pressure has come on special schools to raise standards following the Lamb Inquiry (DCSF, 2009a) and

all Schools were keen to maintain their Outstanding grading, which resonated at least in part with that literature which saw DL as managerialism in disguise.

Finally, an interesting perspective on accountability was offered by the Headteacher of School 1 who commented that he felt accountable to colleagues because of mutual respect, teamwork and support, indicating the role of culture and relationships in underpinning DL:

*It puts the pressure on because you want to do justice to their hard work because you don't want to let them down (Headteacher, School 1).*

#### **4.6.6 The Role of Senior Teams**

Headteachers worked closely with senior teams. Participants from all leadership groups in all schools recognised that senior leadership teams had an important role in shaping and developing strategic direction, although their role was different in each organisation. This provided further insight into the nature of power and empowerment in DL.

Senior teams were characterised by strong interpersonal relationships with almost all Senior Leadership appointments being made internally (Table 8), as described by Bush and Glover, (2012) in their special school study. These close relationships were reflected by SL1 in School 1 who commented that the team was closely aligned through their shared values.

Senior teams, which included middle leaders, also served to bridge the gap between the Headteacher and teachers (Wallace, 2002; Bush and Glover, 2012) as demonstrated in an SMT observation in School 3, where the phrase 'so what's the solution', used by the Headteacher in response to requests for help, had been raised by teachers in Key Stage meetings as an issue arising from the Workplace Survey. One team leader explained that teachers felt,



*If you can't come up with solutions, then it's off the table. They just feel like it gets into a cycle* (Team Leader, School 3).

In the discussion middle leaders voiced teachers' views and suggested the use of more collaborative language, which was accepted by the Headteacher.

The manner in which power was shared in senior teams was not consistent and varied according to circumstances, which reflected Gronn's (2009a) hybrid distribution. Thus SL1, in School 1, commented that he was always consulted, but usually the team made strategic decisions through agreement, such as the decision to academize. In School 2 the Headteacher stated that he saw the senior team as having a powerful role in strategic direction setting, as reflected by Bush and Glover (2012), which emerged organically from the group, showing his commitment to equal participation of senior leaders and himself as found by Wallace, (2001). This was evidenced when the Headteacher described how the staffing structure for the new site was emerging through SMT discussions. Senior leaders supported this view. However, this was not always the case.

A Senior Management Team observation, at School 2 provided further insight into issues of power and empowerment, in the relationship between the Headteacher and the senior team. The Headteacher had initiated a move towards the formation of a Soft Federation in line with Bush and Glover (2012) and Murphy *et al.*'s (2009) view of Headteachers as strategic leaders. In the meeting he distributed leadership of the first phase of the initiative to the Assistant Head for Outreach (AHO), based on her expertise in working with other schools, but gave her the right to reject his proposal, whilst also opening the issue up for discussion within the team.

He commented:

*What they want is to look at is pupil engagement and [AHO], I'm looking at you because I wondered if in Early Years you could do some work - say no if it's not going to work - with the Early Years Department at the [mainstream] school and [the new site] around pupil engagement..... It's a thought. If you think it's not going to work, we'll go back to the drawing board (Headteacher, School 2).*

Later in the meeting however, in the discussion over class teams, which SL1 had brought to SMT, where agreement was not forthcoming between the group, the Headteacher was directive and 'pulled rank' as described by Wallace (2001), to resolve the situation and commented:

*Put [names of individuals] with [names of individuals] and if I have to go in and do something I will. What you need to remember is that I want to move [names of individuals] (Headteacher, School 2).*

This was accepted by the team.

On another occasion, when discussing staffing for the new site, one Assistant Head showed her belief in entitlement to equality of contribution, by challenging the staffing proposals so far agreed (Wallace, 2001). The Headteacher passed ownership back to her and her Key Stage and involved the two incoming Assistant Heads as well, by setting up an *ad hoc* meeting, which demonstrated his role in co-ordinating leadership (Harris, 2004). He commented:

*You might not like this suggestion. With that group of people you've got there [her teachers], sort it! And then give it back to SL1 tomorrow after school. She will then meet with [names of two new Assistant heads] after school (Headteacher, School 2).*

Again, this was accepted by the team and reflected the high levels of synergy found in Wallace's (2001) study. It also aligned with Bush and Glover's (2012, pp.33-34) findings in special schools in which headteachers had confidence in senior teams and allowed them to work without intrusion, but mixed 'solo and team leadership' retaining 'considerable residual power'. My perceptions from observing the meeting were that the coherence of the group, based on shared values built through long standing relationships with a long serving team, underpinned this level of trust and synergy, as argued by Bush and Glover (2012), and evidenced the operation of Organic Distribution described earlier (4.3.3).

#### 4.6.7 Developing and Supporting Leadership in Others.

*Grows own leaders and teachers; Knows and develops staff strengths and interests through external training, learning in role, and bespoke training.*

**Table 13: Thematic matrix showing the role of the Headteacher in developing and supporting others**

Participants						
Schools	HT	SLs	MLs	TLs	Main themes	Broad cross-school themes
School 1		Head finds niches for staff based on strengths. Head supports and promotes teacher initiatives.		Head does teachers performance management and knows staff. Develops support staff to become teachers.	Career development based on knowledge of strengths and interests through trial roles.	

		Staff are trialled informally in roles before promotion.				<p><b>Knows and develops staff strengths and interests through external training, learning in role, bespoke training.</b></p>
		Staff identified to attend external training and then lead whole staff training. Senior leaders model leadership practice. Observation of experienced leaders by new leaders. Autism training empowers teachers to lead.	HT coaches leaders with challenges. HT engages middle leaders to develop leadership skills by coaching teachers.	All teachers belong to subject group to contribute to writing schemes of work.	Leadership development through role.	
		ML training. In-house leadership training.	MLs leadership training.	Early leadership training.	Formal training	
School 2	Knowing and developing individuals' expertise and interests for benefit of school.	Staff interests developed through Masters degrees. Local authority provided leadership training for senior leaders.	HT wants to bring on next generation of leaders.	Teachers encouraged to develop careers. HT encouraged new AHs to use their strengths to decide how to do new role. Teachers given scope to do what they want to do. HT uses staff to coach each other.	Develops leadership through knowing and using individual strengths and interests.	
	Coaches leaders on a day-to-day basis at their request.	Teachers learn leadership skills through SIP groups.			Learning in role.	
School 3	External consultants commissioned by Head to provide bespoke training for SLs and MLs to build leadership capacity. Group confidential coaching led by	Training gave confidence and developed strategies. Leaders identified some areas for training.	Head seeks to develop leadership through coaching from leadership consultants		Bespoke leadership training develops leadership capacity, builds the team and trust-based relationships.	

	external consultants for new leaders. Builds team through training methods.					
		Head knows staff strengths and weaknesses and challenges them to think outside their comfort zone. Observing others. External leadership training.	Head challenged leaders through new roles in new structure.	Learning from coaching training used to buddy peers.	Headteacher knows staff, trains them in variety of settings, and then provides challenges.	

Participants spoke extensively, in all schools, about the range of opportunities for leadership development, which reflected Leithwood *et al.*'s (2007) view that this was one of the core areas of successful headteachers (Table 13). Responses were focused on four areas: firstly, headteachers knew staff interests and expertise and encouraged them to develop these; secondly, Headteachers developed leadership through peer delivery of staff training and coaching and thirdly, through leadership training. Fourthly, leadership was supported through coaching.

To gain a more analytical view of these themes, interview data was viewed against Klar *et al.*'s (2016) model of leadership. In Stage 1, (the identification of potential leaders) several of Klar *et al.*'s (2016) strategies were in evidence, some of which were staff initiated and some initiated by the Headteacher. All schools operated a buddy system to mentor new teachers led by peers. Of importance in all three schools was the practice of headteachers knowing staff interests and strengths and using these as a point of departure, which MacBeath (2005) identified as a key skill required by Headteachers in the repositioning of their role through DL.

A common feature across schools, was that staff requested to attend training, including master's studies, and would then share their knowledge through peer training - an approach that was used in the implementation of TEACCH (Autism Independent UK, 2010) in School 3. Such an approach also evidenced a policy of knowledge creation as well as leadership capacity building. In School 1 this practice was more prevalent than in the other schools and reflected the Headteacher's belief in ongoing learning as one of the main pillars of school culture. He implemented this belief by timetabling a slot for peer-to-peer training each Thursday at 8.00am. Such provision was seen as a key role of the Headteacher by Leithwood (2006), Murphy *et al.* (2009) and Harris (2011) in building capacity for school improvement. He saw his role as follows:

*First of all, to let it happen. To encourage, encourage, encourage teachers to do it. To validate that teachers are training amongst themselves ... (Headteacher, School 1).*

Another deliberate strategy that stood out in School 1, was enabling staff to trial their abilities before being promoted to a middle leadership role, such as TL1's appointment as chair of an E-Mentors group which reflected the school culture of learning and career progression as contended by Klar *et al.* (2016). The effectiveness of these strategies was recognised by Fullan, (2001) and Smylie and Eckert (2017) who argued that the workplace should be the centre of development for leadership. Such collective, as well as individual development, was seen as particularly effective by Harris and Lambert (2003), Muijs and Harris (2006), and Wenner and Campbell (2017).

Similarly, the findings evidenced Stage 2 of Klar *et al.*'s (2016) model in which principals matched abilities to the needs of the school. Thus, in the restructuring of the School 3, SL2

described how the Headteacher used her knowledge of staff expertise to think outside the box and challenge them in their new roles.

In facilitating transition to a new role in Stage 3 the findings again concurred with Klar *et al.*'s (2016) model in schools 1 and 2. For example, School 2 showed an awareness of the emotional needs of leaders in the way that the Headteacher, instructed his two new Assistant Heads to divide the areas of responsibility between themselves in line with their skills which he felt would enable them to build confidence in their first year in post. This supported Murphy *et al.*'s (2009) findings on the adaptation of structures by headteachers to support new leaders. While in School 1 the Headteacher negotiated the requirements of SLTh's new role as Therapies Lead and Assistant Headteacher to attend tribunals, by putting in place a phase of observation and modelling for her.

In contrast to this focus on in-house development, the Headteacher of School 3 commissioned external trainers to provide bespoke leadership training, based on school needs, assessed through a Workplace survey. This reflected the Formal Hierarchical Distribution in School 3 and the importance of context (MacBeath, 2005; Spillane, 2006; Torance, 2013). Other schools accessed external leadership training for staff across all leadership groups, which for Schools 1 and 2 involved attending public courses such as NPQH.

In line with Stage 4 of Klar *et al.*'s (2016) model, the Headteachers of Schools 1 and 2 provided ongoing support for leaders with roles becoming interdependent as trust developed. There were numerous examples of this, such as in School 2 where the Headteacher gave the deputy free rein to review support staff placements. Similarly, in School 1 the Headteacher gave SL1 the same freedom to develop a new assessment system, after discussing initial parameters.

Headteachers and senior leaders in Schools 1 and 2 were also clear that support was offered only when requested, otherwise leaving leaders free to manage their own responsibilities.

The focus on in-house leadership development within the sample schools resonated with my own experience of internal leadership development which was driven by the need to appoint leaders who had a clear understanding of the needs of pupils with CLDD, which has already been argued to be the principal driver of school improvement. This stance reflects Powers, Rayner and Gunter's (2001) findings in which leaders in special education perceived there to be a lack of government training relevant to leadership in this sector. Moreover, through leading staff training, on specialist strategies such as SCERTS (Prizant *et al.*, 2006) leadership development was firmly embedded in meeting pupil needs. The centrality of pupil needs in these processes, which underpinned schools' moral purpose, may also explain why several participants saw the fact that they had 'risen through the ranks' as a key part of their identity as leaders.

#### 4.6.8 Summary

The role of the Headteacher was found to be central to the nature of DL. Whilst retaining overall strategic leadership and decision-making (Murphy *et al.*, 2009), Headteachers empowered others (Torrance, 2013), and shared leadership within 'red lines' (Wallace, 2001). They retained a right of veto, determined the extent of empowerment and the balance between formal and informal mechanisms of distribution, which differed from school to school, as discussed earlier in section 4.4, and were at the heart of the models of distribution identified in section 4.3.



These differences reflected the changing contexts of each school (Gronn, 2009a) and the career path of each headteacher (MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse, 2004) as discussed in the last section (4.5). They also reflected the culture of each school which will be discussed in section 4.7. This was seen through the varying degrees of formality by which teachers were held to account, often taking on a supportive and developmental guise based on positive relationships and trust build up over time, with teachers also self-checking through teams or the Headteacher.

Additionally, Headteachers developed leadership in others, based on cultural values of on-going learning and the encouragement of TL. The dominance of in-house leadership development led to the internal appointment of middle and senior leaders and ensured that leadership was underpinned by an understanding of pupil needs. This will be discussed in section 4.8.3 in relation to the impact of DL on leadership capacity.

In the next section the key role of DL in providing a framework (Harris, 2009a) for meeting complex pupil needs will be further considered through an analysis of TL and collaborative practice (4.7.3) as part of school culture.

#### **4.7 Culture**

*Positive cultures, characterised by teamwork, positive relationships, collaborative practice, and TL, focus on meeting the needs of complex learners as their core value.*

In this section the role of school culture in relation to the nature and extent of distribution will be analysed, with a particular focus on the challenge of meeting the needs of complex learners in the special school context through collaboration and TL, which emerged as key themes

within the context of DL in special education. In question 6 participants were asked to describe the culture of their school. Data is summarised in Table 14.

**Table 14: Thematic matrix showing perceptions of school culture**

Participants						
Schools	HT	SLs	MLs	TLs	Main themes	Broad cross-school themes
School 1	Learning.			Child centred.	Core values	<p><b>Positive cultures, characterised by teamwork, positive relationships collaborative practice and teacher leadership, focus on meeting the needs of complex learners as their core value.</b></p>
	Teamwork is a core part of the culture.	Teamwork supported by stable staffing. Teachers release TAs to cover absence willingly.	Teachers release staff to support peers. High level of trust to do the right thing between teams. Outreach manager supports team promptly by email. New teachers given a buddy. Middle leaders signpost teacher leaders to support.	Teamwork is amazing. Other teams cover breaks when help is needed. There is a bond in class teams. TAs lead sessions to support teacher workload. Teamwork is supported by stable staffing. Everyone helps each other. It's an open school.	Teamwork and mutual support.	
		Therapists meet teachers monthly to set and review targets and plan strategies. Therapists attend teacher meetings. Therapists are school based. Teachers take PPA time in therapies offices and plan together. Therapists	Therapists are always available to help.	Every class has a SaLT and OT attached who lead a weekly session which is continued by teachers. Therapists and teachers set targets together.	Therapists work in partnership with teachers.	

		support teachers in crisis management on day-to-day basis.			
		Working groups e.g. assessment. Teachers share planning and resources.	ML encourages joint planning and resourcing.	Teachers plan with other teachers in PPA, share resources after school and write schemes of work together in English curriculum group. Monitors work experience and shares with 16+ team.	Collaboration through sharing and co-constructing.
		Friendship groups go out after school. Friendship groups collaborate in teacher workroom.	Friendship groups are part of culture. They help each other. TAs are promoted to be teachers and stay friends.	Staff go to the pub after work. Teachers give each other emotional support.	Friendship groups work together.
School 2	Child first.	Pupils first.	Pupils first.	Child centred	Core values:
	Collegiate. Supportive. Hopes it's collaborative. Respect for expertise anywhere in school.	Informal observations between classrooms to share strategies for children. Share ideas for children through meetings. Staff plan in teams. Teachers collaborate with multidisciplinary professionals.	Teachers collaborate to assess, train teams, and develop strategies.	Ethos of sharing. Sharing of expertise when pupils transition between classes. Teachers ask each other for ideas. Teachers share planning. Open classrooms.	Teachers respect, support and learn from each other to develop strategies for complex children.
	Occasional disputes in class teams. Employs a counsellor to resolve difficulties.	Teachers organise events to boost morale. Head supports. Deputy head consults and supports staff	School is like a family. Personality clashes where staff work closely in teams. Close	Family groups work in school. Everyone knows everyone. Teams support each other.	Teamwork based on social relationships, that sometimes fractures is

	Senior managers always available to support staff.	over anxieties about move to new site. Staff trust Head.	friendships between TAs	Managers give advice and support. School counsellor supports. Mutual trust between HT and staff.	supported by Head and SLs.	
School 3	Meeting child's needs.			Everyone is proud of what we do together	Core Values.	
	Supports staff well-being through training. Senior leaders trained in Mental Health First Aid.	Buddy system for new teachers. Trust is seen as essential.	Trust is key.	Teachers give up staff to cover absence in other classes.	Supportive relationships.	
	School is based around teams. Teamwork is essential. Supports teamwork by social evenings. High staff turnover is a barrier.	Therapists support teachers in class and set targets.	Urges teamwork in class teams.	Support from teams in the structure: behaviour team, therapists, PECS co-ordinator, family support worker.	Teamwork.	
	Meetings to share good practice. Open classrooms. Electronic sharing.	Electronic sharing. PPAs set up by leaders to support joint planning. Senior leaders collaborate.	Spends 2 days a week coaching or working alongside teachers.	Joint planning	Collaboration facilitated by senior leaders through formal routines.	

#### 4.7.1 Positive Cultures underpinned by Child centred Core Values

Reflecting the importance of pupil needs in underpinning moral purpose (4.6.1), driving school improvement (4.6.5), and determining the nature of leadership training (4.6.7), school cultures were constructed on core values around meeting the needs of the child. This was typified by the Headteacher of School 3 who commented,

*We do try and keep the children at absolutely the centre of everything we do.*

School cultures were described positively by all participants, without exception. Typical words and phrases used included *supportive, positive, welcoming, loving, good relationships, trust, teamwork, my other family* and *friendly*, which echoed the significance of relationships that were seen in the literature to underpin DL (Spillane, 2006; Harris, 2014) and school improvement (Fullan, 2001; Bennett *et al.*, 2003) and were referred to in relation to the role of the Headteacher (4.6). The all-pervasive nature of school culture, was reflected by TL1 in School 2 who commented,

*It feels like another country when you come here because everyone knows everyone.*

#### **4.7.2 Teamwork and Professional Relationships Developed by Headteachers and Staff**

Teamwork and supportive professional relationships were identified at both a formal and informal level. At a formal level, structures reflected a range of teams across all three schools - Key Stage teams (all schools), Mini-School teams (School 3) and departmental teams such as the Outreach teams at Schools 1 and 2, multidisciplinary teams and class teams. This resonated with Murphy *et al.*'s (2009) writing on the role of the Headteacher in the development of structures and teambuilding in enabling DL, and Ainscow, Fox and Coupe O'Kane's (2003) findings in managing changing government policy within special education.

Supportive relationships were also encouraged by headteachers through the creation of support systems, which recognised the complex needs of students. This was addressed at School 3 through line management meetings and using a counsellor at School 2. Peer support in Schools 1 and 3 was provided through a mentor system of Buddies, for all new teachers. This chimed with Telford's stance (1996) regarding the importance of the development of

collaborative environments in facilitating collective responsibility and teamwork towards a common goal.

Participants spoke at length about how they worked together on an informal, day-to-day basis, which gave an insight into the supportive networks which were deeply embedded in school culture and were sustained and developed by staff themselves (Telford, 1996). In School 1 all leadership groups described how class teams willingly gave up staff to support absence or to cover duties in other classes. One teacher leader set up a Staff Appreciation Board in the staffroom, which was also used by the Headteacher, to post messages. This supportive ethos was summarised by the Headteacher of School 1 as follows:

*Then just, which is gold dust, their teamwork, team spirit. It's phenomenal.*

This reflected the behaviours and values of Telford's (1996, p.26-27) collaborative leadership, particularly the Human Resources element, which she described as underpinned by a 'pervasive camaraderie' along with concern and care for colleagues.

A key aspect of teamwork stressed by all schools across all leadership groups was the importance of trust, which was part of the school culture. This was typified by TL2 in School 2 who commented:

*There is a lot of trust in the school. That is a cultural thing as well.*

Trust within relationships was noted by Cohen and Prusak (2001), Harris (2014), and Spillane (2015) as underpinning teamwork and binding organisations together.

There was evidence of friendships out of school between staff in all three schools. In Schools 2 and 3 leaders recognised the importance of social capital, as contended by Spillane (2006)

and Harris (2014) in teambuilding and motivation, by supporting staff social events. Whilst in School 1 friendship groups were seen to have a positive impact on collaborative learning and the way staff supported each other which one middle leader saw as being linked to the practice of 'growing their own' teachers from TAs. Interestingly, in School 2 the close bonds between staff also had a negative impact. The move to the new site caused anxieties amongst support staff about being split up from friendship groups.

Interview data on teamwork was supported by an observation of an Outreach Team meeting in School 2, which focused on the School Development Plan Review. The importance of teamwork to the group was suggested by the criteria for evaluation of each target, selected by the team leader, which included working together as a team. This view was supported by the group interaction which showed close working relationships: they sat around a table, consistently said 'Yeah' and nodded in agreement, while others were speaking, often finishing each other's sentences; they listened to each other and built on each other's ideas, often with a solutions-focus. The team supported each other by sharing expertise. For example, ML1 commented:

*One of the strengths was asking you [AHO] to come in....to do that work on Pupil Voice. And it made so much difference to that little girl.*

The Outreach Team also offered each other emotional support as part of a trust-based relationship, when managing sensitive or challenging situations in schools. This included support from the Headteacher as part of a broader supportive, trust-based culture based on positive relationships in line with Muijs and Harris, (2006), Murphy *et al.* (2009) and Brundrett and Rhodes (2014) and supports interview data from section 4.6.4. as seen below:

*ML1: And that's another strength I think, is feeling backed up by each other and feeling backed up by you as our line manager and feeling enormously backed up by the Headteacher.*

*AHO: And I know where I have needed to go and say 'There's a difficult situation . What shall I do?' He's incredibly supportive.*

*Teacher: It just feels like he's got your corner.*

*ML: Yeah. You've got our back.*

*Teacher: Well, it trickles through. We've got you and you've got us. We've got each other.*

All of this resonated with Telford's (1996) description of the deep-seated, unspoken beliefs and interactions typical of collaborative leadership. The depth of these relationships showed teamworking to be embedded as part of what MacBeath (2009, p.52) described as the "the way we do things round here" within cultural distribution in School 2 (4.3.3) and echoed the care and concern for colleagues which underpinned Telford's (1996) collaborative leadership.

#### **4.7.3 Teacher Leadership and Collaboration: A Spectrum of Practice**

Collaborative practice was widely referenced by participants and deeply embedded in all three schools, and illustrated the day-to-day operation of DL (Muijs and Harris, 2003) as exemplified by the Headteacher at School 2:

*The word that comes to mind is collegiate. It's not always, but I hope people collaborate with each other, are supportive and I think that does work generally.*



TL was also found to be intricately linked with collaborative practice as reflected by Lambert, (1998), Day and Harris (2002), York-Barr and Duke (2004) and Muijs and Harris (2006) and was identified as a key feature of DL. Findings showed that TL took on a range of forms mirroring the breadth of definitions within the literature (Muijs and Harris, 2006; Fairman and Mackenzie, 2015) including work in individual classrooms, work across the school and with groups beyond the school as reflected in Fairman and Mackenzie's (2012) model. TL also reflected a process that was undertaken individually and collectively as described by York-Barr and Duke (2004).

In the following sections it will be argued, as one of the key findings of this research, that TL had a particular relevance in special education partly in meeting statutory requirements, but more significantly in meeting the needs of pupils with CLLD.

#### **4.7.3.1 Teacher Leadership and Collaboration through Structures and Systems**

The provision of time for TL and collaboration, which was seen to be essential (Harris and Lambert, 2003; Muijs and Harris, 2006; Richie and Woods, 2007; Wenner and Campbell, 2017;) was widely evidenced through Key Stage meetings and working groups. These processes were indicative of Leithwood *et al.*'s planful alignment (2007) and Gronn's (2002a) institutionalised practice, which reflected a policy of teacher empowerment, by headteachers.

Collaborative practice, through structures, took a variety of forms including the sharing of good practice, shared planning and training. Some collaborative practice was instigated by leaders, some was led by staff request. Some practice was more interactive and led to the co-production of new knowledge. Some collaboration took place between individual teachers,

while some took place across larger staff groups. All schools evidenced classrooms that were open to their peers. Day and Harris, (2002) referred to this process as mediation, within TL.

Collaboration also took the form of coaching. In School 3 this was referred to as 'working alongside' and was referred to by all participants as a significant part of school practice. Sometimes team leaders supported new teachers, sometimes it followed a lesson observation and involved an element of raising performance. This mirrors Hargreaves and Dawe (1990, p.12) 'contrived collegiality'. In other schools mentoring did not seem to be linked to accountability, such as in School 1 where coaching was an important part of supporting trainee teachers.

Through working groups, such as the assessment working group in School 1, the School Improvement Plan (SIP) groups in school 2, and the Workplace Survey consultation groups in School 3, teachers were able to engage in school wide improvement, recognised by Muijs and Harris, (2006) and Fairman and Mackenzie, (2012) as a sphere of teacher TL. This process showed that whilst policy decisions were made by senior leaders, teachers were participative in leadership (Day and Harris, 2002) based on their expertise (Wenner and Campbell, 2017) in co-constructing knowledge (Harris, 2014). In School 1 the Headteacher's commitment to collaborative learning was evidenced through formalised Peer Observations as part of the lesson monitoring cycle.

#### **4.7.3.2 Multidisciplinary Collaboration**

Multidisciplinary collaboration was evidenced in all three schools and supported the importance of this practice in special education, in meeting complex pupil needs, recognised by Sachs, Levin and Weiskopf (1992). Collaboration with therapists took place both formally

and informally. In School 1 there was, however, a much closer relationship with Speech and language Therapists (SaLTs) and Occupational Therapists (OTs) which reflected the philosophy of the previous longstanding head that had been continued by the present Headteacher. This again evidenced the importance of the career path of the Headteacher in determining the nature of DL (4.5.1). This close relationship was reflected in the school structure where SLTh, held the dual role of Assistant Head and Therapies Lead, and as such was a member of the Senior Management Team, while other therapists attended teacher meetings. Multidisciplinary collaboration was also supported through routines, as observed in a meeting for reviewing and setting new pupil learning targets between TL2, a SaLT and SLTh, in her role as an OT. The physical location of the Therapies office meant that they were easily accessible for teachers, which indicated an underlying commitment to collaboration in the design of what was a new building.

*I think the fact that a lot of the teachers choose to take their PPA in our therapies' office says a lot and when they're doing their planning - very much like an open discussion between myself and the staff member sat next to me. We do a lot of sharing. All day, every day (SLTh, School 1).*

This reflected the role of the Headteacher as a catalyst in establishing long term collaborative leadership with therapists through structures and systems (Harris and Lambert, 2003).

Additionally, collaboration took place with therapists informally on an *ad hoc*, day-to-day basis, with therapists stepping in to support teachers in crises or planning lessons with them which indicated a deeper level of collaborative working which chimed with elements of MacBeath's (2009) Cultural Distribution. These relationships focused on professional learning

in the workplace as described by Katzenmayer and Moller (2001) and resonated with elements of a PLC (Harris, 2014).

#### **4.7.3.3 Teacher Initiated Teacher Leadership**

Individually initiated TL saw a spectrum of practice, within and across schools, as described by Fairman and Mackenzie (2015). In all schools TL took the form of teachers sharing planning, visiting each other's classrooms through an open-door policy and making resources available to each other electronically, which they saw as part of the culture of the school. This resonated with the importance placed on supportive cultures by Muijs and Harris (2006). However, there were some contrasts between schools which reflected overall school culture, context and the priorities of the Headteacher.

In School 1 TL1's work aligned with many of the spheres of Fairman and Mackenzie's (2012) model: she used internet searches and courses to develop her practice in her classroom (sphere A), she reflected on her own practice with sensory learners (sphere B), she shared ideas about sensory approaches with her peers through training and coaching (sphere C), she co-ordinated a group of teachers to reintegrate a pupil into class (sphere F), she co-trained teachers with a colleague in mainstream schools (Sphere I), and set up a Staff Appreciation Board (Sphere E) to support whole school Well-Being (Sphere F). Interviews showed that she was widely recognised by her peers as a 'go-to' (TL2) person for sensory learners, showing TL as a stance where leadership was valued by peers (Poekert, Alexandrou and Shannon, 2016) and TL as influence (Fairman and MacKenzie, 2015). It also reflected Jackson's (2003, in Harris and Lambert, 2003) view that leadership was given by followers rather than imposed from above.

The importance of a wider supportive school culture in School 1, in enabling TL, as argued by Muijs and Harris (2006), to which all stakeholders contributed (Telford, 1996), was reflected by TL2 who commented that when a teacher developed a good idea the expectation was that 'a training should be developed'. This way of thinking strongly echoed MacBeath's (2005) cultural distribution, where leadership was seen as activity, with people exercising initiative spontaneously and collaboratively as part of a broader nurturing school culture.

In School 2 TL operated in a slightly different way, possibly because it was a smaller school, reflecting the importance of context (Spillane, 2006) discussed in section 4.5. Initiatives were more often at class level, in Fairman and Mackenzie's (2012) sphere's A and B and spread to other classrooms through informal conversations. For example, TL2's expertise in communication and behaviour was spread through conversations over lunch, focused on the complex needs of individual students. However, this way of working, also resonated with the informal culture of the school, led by the Headteacher, where leadership was based on individual strengths, where teachers had high degrees of autonomy and where the child was explicitly voiced as central to the school vision. This again reflected Harris and Lambert's (2003) view on the centrality of the role of the Headteacher.

In School 3 only one example of individually led TL was cited, in which ML1 introduced a programme for inviting parents to come into class to learn with their children. This seemed to indicate the overall dominance of formal processes, in line with MacBeath's (2005) formal distribution.

Teacher leaders were seen by York-Barr and Duke (2004) to influence both principals and colleagues towards school improvement and as such have been described as the most

influential leaders in schools (Muijs and Harris, 2003; 2006). This was seen in School 1 where ML1 developed her interest in play-drama in supporting social interaction for children with autism within in her department. She was then empowered by the Headteacher, acting as catalyst (Harris and Lambert, 2003), to develop drama across the school and proactively build partnerships in the community, as observed in the SMT meeting. As well as influencing curriculum practice ML1 impacted at a deeper level in her department, where TL2 described play as being part of the Early Years culture, which she characterised as the 'maddest' corridor in the school through this approach, where staff engaged affectively and worked closely as a team, reflecting the power of TL. This resonated with the role of TL in building relationships (Day and Harris, 2002) and at a deeper level enculturing (Fairman and MacKenzie, 2012).

In School 2 the influence of TL on principals and school policy was also powerful and was evidenced where ML1 was instrumental in the development of a new approach to writing pupil profiles, by sharing information informally in a conversation with the Headteacher, which had emerged from her role in supervising a student teacher. This informality was widely evidenced in School 2 and indicated that the way in which TL was enacted differed between schools, being dependent upon context (Spillane, 2006) and wider school culture (Harris and Lambert, 2003).

#### **4.7.3.4 All Teachers as Leaders in Special Schools**

TL, which York-Barr *et al.* (2005) and Billingsley (2007) contended was part of the role of all teachers in special education, was evidenced in the observation of a handover meeting in School 3 between an outgoing and incoming class teacher. The meeting covered information about individual pupils and the role of the class teacher both within the school, and in relation

to statutory requirements. Leadership practices described by TL1 included writing IEPs, carrying out specialist communication assessments each term, writing behaviour plans and annual review reports. She worked in partnership with parents to agree IEP targets and documents such as behaviour plans. She also collaborated with the SaLT and OT to write communication and sensory targets and develop strategies. As well as this she had responsibilities, common to all class teachers, including progress tracking systems, planning and end of term evaluation and review.

Teachers were also responsible for leading a team of teaching assistants. The complexity of this role was particularly pronounced in School 2 where observation and interview data from all participants described the challenging nature of managing a group of highly committed adults, who worked in a limited space with complex children, especially when their relationships were confronted by major change, such as becoming a split site school. A class team meeting observation, which was chaired by TL3, evidenced these challenges where teachers had to co-ordinate support staff and a large team of therapists. Support staff showed a strong sense of loyalty to their children and voiced how they felt pupil choices had not been honoured by a therapist in a recent session. In managing the situation and supporting multidisciplinary working TL3 agreed to meet with therapists, exercising leadership skills of negotiation and mediation, as described by Fairman and MacKenzie (2015).

In Schools 1 and 3 teachers acted as Buddies to new teachers, guiding them through processes, often specific to special education and sometimes part of the SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2015b), such as writing annual reviews, liaising with parents to write IEP targets, setting up classroom environments, coaching in the use of communication systems such as PECS (Bondy

and Frost, 1994) or SCERTS (Prizant *et al.*, 2006) which underpinned school practice. This role was recognised as a widely practised element of teacher induction in special education by Billingsley (2007) and viewed as a key element of TL by Fairman and MacKenzie (2012). In this respect it can be argued that TL has a particular role to play in special education.

#### **4.7.3.5 Teacher Leadership, Collaborative Inquiry, and Professional Learning Communities**

TL as disciplined collaboration focused on inquiry, enabled by school leaders within a PLC, as described by Harris (2014), was evidenced in the processes at work in the E-Mentors group in School 1 which was part of a 5-year School-University partnership. This was evidenced in the aims of the project which were outlined at its outset as:

*To identify and develop examples of effective practice in using ICT which facilitate learning and aid teaching of pupils; To develop 'e-Mentor' schemes in which teachers work collaboratively to develop their effective use of ICT ; To build a community of practice within the school which is sustainable and feeds into Continuous Professional Development (E-mentors PowerPoint, School 1)*

The partnership had been set up by the Headteacher and had parallels with projects in special education described by Billingsley (2007), and Epanchin and Colucci (2002). This demonstrated a commitment by the Headteacher to the development of collaborative inquiry at whole school level as part of a 'learning organization', (Harris, 2014, p.96) and the successful functioning of a PLC through the provision of time, resources and opportunities (Harris, 2014). It also resonated with Leithwood *et al.*'s (2007) planful alignment and Gronn's (2002a) institutionalised practice. Additionally, it showed the importance of complex pupil needs which required an inquiry-based approach (Carpenter *et al.*, 2011; Schechter and Feldman,



2013; Carpenter, 2016), as being influential in defining the nature of DL, whilst being supported by it simultaneously.

In the meeting an inquiry approach was evidenced as teachers reflected and fed back to the group about the strategies they had trialled and their impact on pupil learning. For example, a video was shared with the group which showed a systematic research-based approach, as outlined by Poekert, Alexandrou and Shannon (2016), through the methodical exploration and evaluation of the use of a QR codes project to support the teaching of functional skills.

The group went on to collectively agree priorities for the next year: they reflected, built on each other's ideas, and offered solutions focused suggestions, which met most of Harris' (2014) and Dufour, Eaker and Dufour's (2005) requirements of a PLC, typified Lambert's constructivist leadership (Lambert, 1998) and illustrated aspects of TL contained in Fairman and MacKenzie's (2012) Model. The dialogue evidenced professional dispositions such as openness and respect, as part of the professional relationships, described by Fairman and MacKenzie (2015) and showed the social distribution of leadership over a number of people, where leadership was accomplished through their interactions (Muijs and Harris, 2006) that underpinned TL.

At the end of the meeting the commitment of leaders to collaborative learning and inquiry, along with the value the school placed on teacher input and the motivating effect it had on teachers, was shown by the Deputy Head who commented,

*You've been amazing. I'm proud of all of you and the children and especially thank you for your commitment. I'm fully aware of the extra work that you do because you want to (Deputy Head, School 1).*

#### 4.7.8 Summary

The nature of DL in each school was inextricably intertwined with school culture which was built on core values of meeting complex pupil needs. In doing this, teamwork and collaborative practice underpinned working practice and lay at its heart. In School 1 collaborative inquiry and TL also characterised this response to pupil needs. Such practices recognised the expertise of teachers and involved empowering them to make or influence decisions based on mutual trust and positive relationships, as discussed when considering the role of the Headteacher and the nature and extent of empowerment (4.6). In this way pupil needs underpinned school culture, which in turn influenced the nature of DL within which TL emerged as a key theme.

Headteachers were central to the formation of school culture, which reflected their role in the development of moral purpose and vision as contended in section 4.6.1. Thus, in developing cultural norms around TL and collaborative practice, Headteachers acted in a formal capacity as catalysts through structures and routines. Additionally, they worked alongside senior and middle leaders to enable the development of relationships and rebuild them where necessary. Differences between schools evidenced the importance of the career path of the Headteacher and school context, which in turn impacted on the nature of DL.

Teachers also shaped and supported school culture on a day-to-day level through professional and personal relationships, within a cyclical process, which Headteachers managed as part of their overall accountability for school performance as discussed in section 4.6.

School cultures based on collaboration and TL provided rich opportunities for capacity building, knowledge creation and motivated staff which will be considered in the next section.

#### 4.8. Positive Outcomes of Distributed Leadership

*Increased motivation through involvement. Retention of staff. Capacity building.*

*Meeting needs of complex learners. Impact on teaching and learning.*

This section considers the outcomes of DL in relation to research question three. In Question 8 participants were asked about the benefits of DL. Data is summarised in Table 15.

**Table 15 Thematic matrix showing perceived benefits of Distributed Leadership**

Participants						
Schools	HT	SLs	MLs	TLs	Main themes	Broad cross-school themes
School 1	Variety and challenge make leaders thrive.	Staff happier and productive when they feel valued and challenged to grow.	Breadth of activities stops job being boring. Gives a sense of importance which makes people thrive.	Helping and giving advice makes you feel happy and willing.	Varied job and feeling valued increases well-being and motivation.	<b>Increased motivation, feelings of self-worth and well-being of staff support knowledge creation, leadership capacity, and pupil learning.</b>
		Pupil needs better met through collaboration.		Freedom to make changes benefits pupils. TacPac, introduced by TL has impacted on pupil engagement.	Pupils benefit from having needs better met through teacher initiative.	
		Multiple sources of support.	Staff strengths used and teachers promoted.	Teachers learn from each other through subject planning groups. Teachers have multiple sources of support. Staff bring different ideas and outlooks.	Staff support and learn from each other building new knowledge.	

	Head encourages TL which facilitates learning.	Need to distribute to cover the workload.		Gives opportunity to learn about other things besides teaching	Capacity building through TL.
School 2	DL meets emotional needs of staff.	Increased involvement motivates, promotes self-worth and keeps staff. Control over own area keeps staff.		High, but realistic expectations from senior leaders motivates. Staff feel their opinion matters.	Involvement motivates and meets emotional needs.
	Staff are encouraged to develop their interests and train others. Teachers encouraged to develop leadership skills as part of their role e.g. leading Child Protection Meetings as best placed person.		School is stronger for using individual strengths to address weaknesses. Makes a strong team. Used skills in MSI to develop expertise across the school.	Signalong, Intensive Interaction and Sensory Circuits developed across the school from teachers' interests.	New knowledge and leadership capacity created through enabling TL based on expertise and interest.
School 3	DL provides more opportunities for growth. Staff have creative ideas that will spark something amazing.	Bespoke leadership training for new teachers in structure increases skills and confidence. School grows its own teachers to retain best staff. Staff attend courses and then train staff at school.	Head encourages teachers to stretch themselves and apply for new roles.		DL builds leadership capacity through challenge and new opportunities and creates new knowledge.

	DL makes for a positive workplace. Challenge motivates. Being able to contribute makes staff feel valued.	Freedom to develop expertise and support others motivates.			Involvement and challenge motivate.	
			Everyone knows who is accountable.	Structure and meetings give teachers a voice to address issues.	Structure brings increased accountability and improved communication.	

#### 4.8.1 Motivation

**Table 16: Perceived links between Distributed Leadership and increased motivation**

Links	School 1	School 2	School 3
Freedom to contribute	X	X	X
Feel valued	X	X	X
Feel challenged	X	X	X
Sense of achievement/ self worth/importance	X	X	X
Can support others	X		X
Happiness and well-being	X		
Meets emotional needs		X	
Sense of ownership and responsibility		X	
Empowered through training to contribute		X	
Can make a difference outside classroom			X
Can develop expertise			X

There was evidence from all schools that DL had a positive motivational impact as summarised in Table 16. The dominant theme that emerged across all schools was that leaders felt valued

and gained a sense of self-worth as contended by Muijs and Harris (2003). Further, by being challenged, teachers' interest and motivation in their work was maintained, as reflected by the Headteacher of School 3. This echoed Wenner and Campbell's (2017) view of the positive impact of challenges associated with TL on class-based leaders. Teachers also gained job satisfaction from reciprocal peer support as contended by Gersten *et al.* (2001) and Singh and Billingsley (1998). For example, two participants in School 1 described how they gained satisfaction from being able to offer advice to colleagues, while SL1, at the same school, suggested the significance of the impact of DL by linking it to well-being and happiness.

#### 4.8.2 Staff Retention

The links between DL and staff retention in School 2 were attributed by SL1 to the high levels of autonomy given to staff in their classrooms and curriculum. Of importance, for TL1, was the fact that senior managers understood and accommodated the needs of the children, as well as knowing the degree of challenge wanted by each member of staff, which enabled them to meet staff's emotional needs. The Headteacher and SL1 also described how a counsellor was employed by the school to support staff with emotional difficulties, such as a pupil death or difficulties in working as part of a class team. Billingsley (2004) recognised the importance of such support in job satisfaction in special education.

In contrast to School 2, the Headteacher at School 3 identified difficulties in recruitment and poor staff retention as an issue for the school, which TL3 felt were linked, at least in part, to workload around SEND statutory processes. This would seem to suggest that TL within special education was a barrier to staff retention, as reflected by Whitakker (2000) and Billingsley (2004), although this was not borne out in Schools 1 and 2. In addressing these issues in School

3 teachers were supported through peer mentoring and 'working alongside' with line managers, which Singh and Billingsley (1998, cited in Billingsley, 2004) saw as linked to staff retention.

#### 4.8.3 Capacity Building

The role of the Headteacher in developing leadership in others was discussed in section 4.6.7. The impact of this was recognised in the way that, capacity building was identified as an outcome of DL by all groups of leaders in all schools.

Firstly, on a practical level, it gave the school more scope to cover its increasingly complex workload, which Muijs and Harris (2006), Male and Rayner (2007), Harris *et al.*, (2007), and Torrance (2013) viewed as a key rationale for DL, as identified by SL1 in School 1:

*I think it makes us more effective as an organisation. The size, the scope of what we do would be impossible if all the people at the top hoarded all the leadership responsibility. We have to distribute.*

Secondly, TL was considered important in building future individual leadership capacity by all groups of leaders, as observed by the Headteacher of School 2 who described how he prepared one of his new Assistant Heads by challenging her to investigate a complaint whilst still a class teacher. This reflected the personal and leadership growth which Poekert, Alexandrou and Shannon (2016) posited could be transferred to other situations and provided the rationale for TL.

Thirdly, DL was believed to build the capacity of the school for sustained improvement, and simultaneously further enhance DL (Harris, 2014). For example, in School 1, observation data

from the E-Mentors group, showed how collaborative inquiry within a PLC, contributed to capacity building. In identifying areas of focus for the next year members were able to develop skills such as negotiation and decision-making which Fairman and MacKenzie (2015) and Hargreaves (2002, cited in Muijs and Harris, 2006) recognised as part of the way PLC s developed the capacity for improvement. Interactions also demonstrated teachers had developed high levels of confidence and supported Wenner and Campbell's (2017) and Poerkert *et al.*'s (2016) views that TL supported professional and personal growth. For example, when discussing an exhibition of the group's work with the Deputy Head and Facilitator, TL1 contributed assertively to decision-making.

Facilitator: *Do you want to show it to teachers only or parents?*

TL1: *No to everyone, I think.*

Facilitator: *The teachers' one is going to be different. It's showing them details of how you do it. The parents' one is more of a show.*

TL1: *In my head I want that for everyone, anyway. I want them both set up.*

(TL1, School 1 and Facilitator, E-Mentors)

The meeting also aligned with Harris and Lambert's (2003), Fairman and MacKenzie's (2015), Poerkert *et al.*'s (2016), and Klein *et al.*'s (2018) contentions, that as well as being underpinned by relationships, disciplined collaboration, generated further social capital through the relationships that developed in the group, and thereby created an ongoing cyclical process.



It was clear that teachers were highly motivated by collaborative inquiry through E-Mentors as reflected by the facilitator who mirrored Fullan's (2010) views on the power of collective endeavour to bring about change, commenting,

*I think the important thing has been the development of teachers. I mean, why they're here is because they feel that something's happening, otherwise they wouldn't have given their time* (Facilitator, E-mentors).

This supported Harris' (2014) research that as well as being closely associated with DL, PLCs further enhanced DL by increasing ownership through innovation (Harris, 2014), and thus provided the 'glue' that bound the school together, (Copland, 2003, p.394).

Fourthly, the E-Mentors group data resonated with Quadrant 4, the Improving School, of Harris and Lambert's (2003) Leadership Capacity Matrix, in that TL1 showed herself to be a skilful leader in the way she co-ordinated the group and challenged the Deputy Head, regarding strategies for sharing the group's successes. The group also evidenced norms of collaboration and reflective practice in the way that it reviewed its innovative work, which focused on enabling pupils to engage and make progress. This supported the role of TL, in building capacity for improvement.

#### **4.8.4 Internal Appointment of Senior Leaders**

Finally, in Schools 1 and 3 capacity building was evidenced in the practice of schools 'growing their own' leaders which was discussed in relation to the role of the Headteacher (4.6.3).

**Table 17: Number of staff from each leadership group gaining promotion within each school.**

	School 1	School 2	School 3
Senior leaders	2	3	2
Middle leaders	2		1
Teacher leaders	2		1

Table 17 shows that a significant number of Senior leaders had been promoted internally, which aligned with Bush and Glover’s (2012) findings in special schools. This practice was particularly prominent in schools 1 and 3, where several had joined the school as teaching assistants and trained, with the school, through the Graduate Teaching Programme. SL1 in School 3 stated that this practice was driven by difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified applicants, supporting both Male and Rayner’s (2007) findings on the inadequacy of initial teacher training for special education and Power, Rayner and Gunter’s (2001) assertions on the lack of government training relevant to leadership in special education.

#### **4.8.5 Impact on Teaching and Learning**

In question 10 each participant was asked about the impact of DL on teaching and learning. Data is summarised in Table 18 and supports the emergence of four key positive outcomes.

**Table 18: Thematic matrix showing impact of Distributed Leadership on teaching and learning practice.**

Participants						
Schools	HT	SLs	MLs	TLs	Predominant themes	Broad cross school themes
School 1		Collaboration with therapists develops sensory approaches. Peer support is effective in training sessions. Peer observations spread good practice and deepen understanding of teaching and learning.	Outreach team impacts on teaching and learning in mainstream schools.	Play-drama approach was spread by middle leader in her department. Gives the opportunity for new ideas from teachers to be shared.	Collaboration spreads good practice.	<b>Good practice is developed through TL and shared through collaboration with evidence of co-ordination by senior leaders.</b>
			New ideas are co-ordinated by senior leaders to fit in with ethos.		Senior leaders co-ordinate new ideas to ensure consistency with ethos.	
	Teachers were motivated to set up new work placements by being able to support pupils.				New pupil opportunities result from increased motivation.	
School 2	New initiatives such as Write Start set up by teachers to meet pupils' needs.		Teacher of Deaf and Visually impaired set up new practice through her interests.	Teachers are free to change curriculum plans based on pupil needs.	Teachers empowered to develop practice to better meet pupil needs.	

		Peer mentoring encourages reflection on practice.		Impact of openness to new ideas. New knowledge brought from master's level study. Teacher leader spreads good practice in communication.	Teachers are encouraged to develop interests which become embedded in the school. New knowledge and expertise around teaching and learning is developed and shared through collaboration.
School 3	Peer observations and videos of lessons impact on teaching and learning.	Sharing of good practice is supported by buddying and 'working alongsides'		Input from PECS co-ordinator has improved communication and practice. PECS co-ordinator has shared good practice through videos of lessons.	Good practice is shared through collaboration.
				Paired learning walks give managers a clearer idea of how to support teachers.	Collaboration between managers gives more focused approach to teaching and learning.

Teachers and middle leaders in all schools gave examples which showed how empowerment to take initiatives led to improved practice which was co-ordinated by the Headteacher. This allowed formal leaders to make use of a wider range of staff, as contended by Harris (2014) and was shown in School 1 where teachers used contacts to broker work placements for students in support of the school internship initiative.

Similarly, in School 2 the Headteacher stated:

*You give people autonomy they will put practices in place which they will then discuss with their colleagues, for example, Write Start, one teacher, put it in place in her class,*

*discussed it with other people and it now happens in lots of classes* (Headteacher, School 2).

These examples reflected Leithwood, Harris and Hopkin's (2008) view that leadership had a greater impact on pupils when it was widely distributed, in this case by providing new learning opportunities.

#### **4.8.5.1 Improved Practice through Sharing and Collaboration**

The literature (Muijs and Harris, 2003; Heck and Hallinger, 2009; Harris, 2009a) viewed the impact of DL being mediated through processes such as collaboration, for which DL provided the framework. Participants supported this view, identifying collaborative practice as one of the benefits of DL.

Teachers in all schools identified a link between collaboration and improvements to teaching and learning, (Table 18). In School 1 the effectiveness of peer-to-peer learning was viewed as important, whether through peer observations, discussions during training, mentoring which encouraged reflection on practice, openness to new ideas from new staff, coaching or buddying. SL1 illustrated this by describing how the use of age-appropriate workbooks for complex students was spread through the secondary school by peer-to-peer observations. The impact of this process aligned with Fullan's (2007) view of the workplace as the most effective context for professional development.

#### **4.8.5.2 Individualised Programmes through Multidisciplinary Input**

Another theme, in Schools 1 and 2, was the impact of collaboration with therapists in constructing individualised programmes for complex pupils.

In School 2, SL1 described how a reception teacher worked with a therapist to rewrite an individual learning plan to get the best for the child, which showed the embedded nature of multidisciplinary partnership:

*You know it's how we look at it by taking on board everybody's point of view, including parents and therapists (SL1, School 2).*

Similarly, in School 1 SL2 commented that partnership working with therapists, which included training and in class support, meant that

*'it comes as second nature now, the therapeutic part, or the sensory part'*  
(SL2, School 1).

An observation in School 1 of a pupil target review and setting meeting, between TL2 and the OT and SaLT attached to her class, evidenced an open collaborative approach, in which participants questioned each other, as they drilled down to make sure each target was assessed accurately, an appropriate new target was set, appropriate resources were to hand in new classrooms for September and information had been shared with new class teachers and therapists, to ensure success for the child. During the meeting participants sat around a computer, while TL2 entered data, and either echoed or queried each other's views, as shown in Table 19. This open, trust-based, approach aligned with the relational trust that Bryk and Schneider (2002) contended facilitated classroom innovation and Covey and Merrill's (2008, cited in Harris, 2014) view that trust equated with organisational improvement.

**Table 19: School 1; Excerpt from multidisciplinary target setting meeting between TL2, SaLT, and SLTh**

Pupil target: 'To pull open the drawer with her hands, put bag in and close it.'	
SaLT and SLTh drill down to get a clear understanding of achievement.	
TL2	<i>Sometimes it takes a bit of time, but she opens it and needs guiding to approach the drawer.</i>
SLTh:	<i>OK. Once she's there.</i>
TL2:	<i>Hand over hand.</i>
SLTh:	<i>How often was she needing hand over hand to get herself doing it?</i>
TL2:	<i>It's now maybe once a week if she's in a funny mood.</i>
SLTh:	<i>Really. So, she's waiting.</i>
TL2:	<i>But in general, she's able to open it, put her bag in and push it.</i>

#### 4.8.5.3 Development of Strategies to Meet the Needs of Complex Learners

DL and collaborative practice were linked to the development of specialist strategies to support the needs of complex learners. For example, in School 2, ML1, who was an expert in Multi-sensory Impairment (MSI) described how she trained staff, at the request of the Headteacher, and then worked with another MSI teacher to implement new strategies across the school.

*So, we drew on her strengths and knowledge, but she was also sent on a training course for Cerebral Visual Impairment and then when she came back her role was to support the class teachers and teaching assistants (ML1, School 2).*

This aligned with Harris' (2009a, p.253) view that DL could provide the 'organisational circuitry' for knowledge creation through which tacit knowledge, in this case the expertise of ML1, could be made explicit and shared with the group. The flexibility of leadership on the

part of the Headteacher, ML1, the MSI teacher and the openness of class teams led to the development of specialist strategies across the school. Similarly, in School 1, TL2 reflected on the impact of ML1 in developing a play-drama approach to learning on her corridor to meet the needs of children with autism ‘which has definitely come from her’. Whilst in School 3, TL1 described how she trained and coached staff in the use of PECS (Bondy and Frost, 1994) which was now used across the school day, rather than just to request snacks at break.

#### 4.8.6 Divergent Views about the Impact of Distributed Leadership on Pupil Outcomes

In question 11 participants’ views were sought on the impact of DL on pupil outcomes. Data is summarised in Table 20 and shows divergent views.

**Table 20: Thematic matrix showing views about impact of Distributed Leadership on pupil outcomes.**

Participants						
Schools	HT	SLs	MLs	TLs	Predominant themes	Overarching themes
School 1	Staff go the extra mile to secure the right opportunities for students.	Spreadsheets show positive outcomes linked to OT input.	Play-drama approach has led to improved skills.	Teacher leader leads and co-ordinates programme and staff team which reintegrated pupil into the classroom.	Positive outcomes are perceived for pupils.	Divergent views (limited measurable data, some instinctive perceptions, some questioning of whether outcomes can be linked to one factor)
		SCERTS training has underpinned pupil outcomes.		The achievement of Personal Learning Plan targets evidence that progress is linked to SCERTS. Teachers empowered to write tailored targets which enable progress.	Positive and measurable pupil outcomes are underpinned by teacher and SCERTS leadership.	



		Outcomes affected by many factors.	No evidence.		No firm quantifiable evidence links DL to pupil outcomes.
School 2	Head's philosophy of 'high autonomy, high achievement' underpins his leadership. Good feedback from parents. Ofsted recognised good outcomes.				Perceived Correlation between autonomy and outcomes based on broad whole school evaluation by one participant.
	High phonics attainment in one class resulted from teacher initiative.			IEPs evidence good outcomes where teachers have been empowered to set up programmes for pupils.	Limited evidence of links between DL and positive outcomes perceived.
School 3	Outcomes not due to the Head, but to leadership across the school.	Outcomes are linked to learning which in turn is linked to DL.	The new structure ensured that progress can be tracked well, and the right support put in place, although it is too early to generate enough data.		Positive outcomes perceived as a result of new structure
		Individual examples of increased pupil engagement evidenced through lesson observations following staff training in TEACCH which has been implemented across the school through performance management targets.		Pupils PECS levels have improved due to training.	Measurable evidence of individual positive pupil outcomes linked to inputs through DL.

None of the schools had explored the impact of leadership on pupil outcomes and therefore a comprehensive data-based contextualisation of findings with studies such as those of Leithwood and Mascall (2008), Leithwood, Patten and Jantzi (2010), and Heck and Hallinger (2009) was not possible. Instead, a range of responses, which were not polarised, to individual schools regarding the relationship between DL and pupil outcomes, were given.

Some responses made direct links between individual pupil outcomes and DL. For example, TL1 in School 1, related a case where she initiated and co-ordinated an alternate programme with therapists and TAs for a child that was refusing to come into class. The outcome was that the child returned to class and re-engaged with his learning, which was seen to underpin the Engagement Profile, within the Rochford Review (STA, 2016). Similarly, another leader (SLTh1) argued that her role as SCERTS (Prizant et al., 2006) trainer, led to whole school implementation of SCERTS, which led to increased pupil engagement, which was evidenced through the achievement of SMART individual pupil targets, as was observed through the target review meeting led by TL2. These scenarios met Hallinger and Heck's (1996) criteria for linking DL with pupil outcomes through identifying elements influenced by leaders, which in turn impacted on students. However, these findings did not align with Wenner and Campbell's (2017) review of TL which found no evidence of linking TL and pupil outcomes.

Within the broad gambit of collaborative practice, the role of disciplined professional inquiry and reflection, through the E-Mentors group in School 1, led to the development of specialised strategies, focused on individual student's autism, as advocated by Carpenter *et al.* (2011). It also led to improved outcomes. For example, one teacher commented:

*I wanted to see if there is a connection between movement and language. So, games that are targeting movement can actually have a result in terms of speech and language development. So, I want to test that part mainly, and I did see that. Children were really motivated, started to express themselves a little. Most with key words for example, [names of students] were saying 'jump', 'play' (Teacher, School 1).*

This very specific learning supported Hargreaves (2002, in Muijs and Harris, 2006) view that PLCs, such as the E-Mentors group, lead to measurable improvement in pupil learning. It also resonated with Leithwood and Mascal's (2008) study which saw improved outcomes mediated through other factors such as motivation, capacity and work setting. Finally, it demonstrated the significance of DL within special education, in providing the 'organisational circuitry (Harris, 2009a, p.253)', to meet the needs of this group of students in special education.

#### **4.8.7 Summary**

DL was perceived to have positive outcomes for school leadership through increased motivation (Muijs and Harris, 2003; Wenner and Campbell, 2017), improved teacher retention, increased organisational capacity (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006; Gunter and Rayner, 2007; Harris *et al.*, 2007; Torrance, 2013), and individual leadership capacity (Poerkert *et al.*, 2016; Wenner and Campbell, 2017). It was also seen to have improved outcomes for teaching and learning. Additionally, a significant number of leaders identified links between DL and individual pupil outcomes whilst recognising that many other factors were contributory (Hallinger and Heck, 1996).

These outcomes were founded on key themes identified earlier in relation to the role of the Headteacher (4.6) school cultures (4.7) and teacher empowerment (4.4). Positive relationships, which underpinned school culture, enabled both peer-to-peer (Singh and Billingsley, 1998; Gersten *et al.*, 2001) and headteacher (Billingsley, 2004) emotional support. Relationships also enabled TL and collaborative practice (Muijs and Harris, 2003; Fullan, 2007; Hallinger and Heck, 2009; Harris, 2009a) including multidisciplinary partnership, which led to knowledge creation (Harris, 2009a). Additionally, they enabled collaborative inquiry which supported individual learning and progress (Harris and Lambert, 2003) for complex learners (Carpenter *et al.*, 2011) through the utilisation of teacher expertise (Harris, 2014).

All the above had direct links with sustained, school improvement (Hargreaves, 2002, in Muijs and Harris, 2006; Harris, 2014; Fairman and MacKenzie, 2015) and came full circle to raising motivation (Copland, 2003; Harris, 2014). However, in the context of special education these key themes associated with DL were crucial in meeting complex pupil needs (Billingsley, 2007; Schechter and Feldman, 2013; Carpenter, 2016), and compensating for inadequate government training (Powers, Rayner and Gunter, 2001), again suggesting that DL has a particular relevance within the field of special education.

#### **4.9 Negative Outcomes of Distributed Leadership**

*Increased workload; Lack of clarity of roles, leading to inconsistency and inefficiency.*

Although participants for the most part linked DL to improved outcomes a small number of negative outcomes were reported in question 9 which addressed this issue directly. Participants' responses are summarised in Table 21.

**Table 21: Thematic matrix showing perceived negative outcomes of Distributed Leadership**

Participants						
Schools	HT	SLs	MLs	TLs	Predominant themes	Broad cross school themes
School 1	Aware of need for work-life balance.	SLs make adjustments at times of pressure. Staff are aware of each other's workload when asking for advice and respect a 'not now' response.	Have to say 'no' sometimes. Deputy supports with prioritising workload. Head prevents TLs from developing too many new projects.	Deputy head understands issues around workload and makes adjustments for teachers. TAs support teacher workload by leading classes at times.	Senior leaders aware of workload pressures of DL and support staff.	<p><b>Lack of consistency, efficiency and increased workload unless senior leaders are aware and provide support.</b></p>
		Teachers not sure who is the right person to approach.	A job gets done twice. It's hard to know who is accountable.		Lack of clarity of roles leads to blurring of accountability and duplication.	
School 2	.	Staff leave a gap when they move on which impacts on the community.			Sustainability of teacher led initiatives when staff leave.	
	Sometimes things don't get done because people don't have the capacity.	Head and deputy cover classes to support with workload as needed.  All teachers have to manage a multidisciplinary team.		Believes that the Head wouldn't increase workload if a teacher could not manage it.	Increased workload is supported by senior leaders.	
		Ideas don't always get followed up.	Difficulties around accountability and keeping Head informed.	People go in their own direction. Things don't always get done. Poor communication.	Lack of consistency and cohesion through lack of clarity of roles.	
School 3	No disadvantages.	No disadvantages of the new structure.	Too early to say if there are disadvantages	No disadvantages.	No disadvantages to DL through structure.	

#### 4.9.1 Lack of Clarity of Roles

Responses suggested that lack of clarity of roles reduced efficiency and caused some confusion about accountability in both Schools 1 and 2. In School 1, middle and senior leaders, saw this confusion in the form of staff not knowing who to approach and occasionally two people carrying out the same task. By contrast in School 2, all leaders except for the Headteacher, felt that lack of clarity of roles was an issue, which led to a lack of consistency between leaders, lack of focus of direction, jobs not getting done and poor communication especially regarding keeping the Headteacher informed. Reflecting this view TL2 commented:

*Sometimes it's been spread out so much and everyone is doing their own thing, and then you go, we've got to get all this back in. Make this a cohesive thing.*

Whilst these difficulties supported Wenner and Campbell's (2017) recognition of the need for clarity of roles in practical terms and resonated with Bush and Glovers (2012) observation that effective teams had clear roles, they did not indicate any area of conflict within the micropolitics of the schools as described by Storey (2004). Similarly, TL1's comment above did not suggest that teachers needed role clarification to give them the confidence to lead for fear of encroaching on colleagues' areas of responsibility (Klar *et al.*, 2016), secure their acceptance (Hirsh and Segolsson ,2019) or experienced difficulties in relationships with peers, as reported in 15% of articles reviewed by Wenner and Campbell (2017). Rather, it seemed likely that, in view of participants' clarity about the purpose of the school, they were able to tolerate uncertainty as suggested by MacBeath (2009) in phase 3 of his model.

#### 4.9.2 Increased Workload

There was recognition in all schools, particularly where leaders were class based, that workload was increased. For example, TL1 at School 3 commented, regarding workload, to her replacement in a teacher hand over observation:

*It's a bit overwhelming but everyone's, super helpful. You can always ask someone if you're not sure of anything. It's a very helpful school.*

This echoed the findings of 9% of the articles reviewed by Wenner and Campbell (2017). In Schools 1 and 2, however, there were strategies in place to ease workload at times of pressure. For example, in School 1, one participant used her support staff to lead lessons, which also provided development opportunities for them. Significantly, headteachers and deputies supported with prioritising work, reducing pressure, or providing more time by covering classes themselves, thereby evidencing the role of cultures of trust and support in making increased workload manageable. The following comment reflected these views.

*I think it would be very easy to fall into the trap of just delegate, give, give, give and not appreciate the workload that somebody else already has (SL1, School 1).*

Increased workload, therefore, did not make teachers hostile towards DL as contended by Barth *et al.* (1999, cited in Harris, 2004). By contrast in School 3 it was asserted by the Headteacher that workload was an issue, but it did not relate to DL, while SL1 saw some increased workload for middle leaders.

### 4.9.3 Summary

The small number of negative outcomes relating to DL focused on issues around workload and lack of clarity of roles (Wenner and Campbell, 2017). Workload issues were either self-managed or resolved by senior managers, with staff understanding when a request for support was declined by peers. This indicated a culture of understanding, trust and support (Muijs and Harris, 2006; Richie and Woods, 2007). Similarly, issues around clarity of roles had not been resolved, but were tolerated and did not support difficulties identified by Storey, (2004) Klar *et al.* (2016), and Hirsh and Segolsson, (2019). These responses again reinforced the role of culture in underpinning DL, as identified in section 4.7.

### 4.10 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have presented the findings from interviews and observations of headteachers, senior, middle and teacher leaders in three special schools, and analysed this in the light of the literature. In doing this I aimed to explore the perceptions and experiences of leaders of DL in the context of change and securing school improvement. In each section I have identified the main themes which were found across schools along with the differences between them based on what participants said and what was observed in practice. In this section I will aim to summarise and draw together the most significant of those themes in addressing the following questions: What insights do school leaders' accounts give us into how they experience managing change through distributed leadership? What are school leaders' perceptions of the outcomes of distributed leadership in securing improvement? These issues will be discussed in more detail in the final chapter.



In considering the first of these questions DL was perceived as a multi-faceted phenomenon which presented differently in each school, resulting in the identification of three main types of distribution - formal hierarchical distribution, co-ordinated distribution and organic distribution as summarised in Figure 19. It was argued that these differences resulted from the interaction of four themes which reflected Spillane's (2006, p.14) view of DL as 'the interaction of leaders, followers and the situation'. First, was school context, which included the career path of the Headteacher and other leaders, alongside ongoing change within the school, notably rising pupil numbers. Second, within that context, the role of the Headteacher as strategic and moral leader, who acted as a catalyst, co-ordinated, empowered, supported and developed leadership in others, whilst reserving the right to say 'no', was critical. Third was school culture, which was characterised by positive relationships, teamwork, collaboration, including multidisciplinary partnership and TL, and was shaped by the Headteacher and staff within the school context.

However, a fourth factor, which ran across the above themes, was critical in determining the nature of DL, namely the growing number of pupils with CLDD. Pupil needs drove school improvement, underpinned moral purpose and led to the internal recruitment and training of leaders which ensured that leadership was founded on an understanding of their needs. In meeting the needs of these students, for whom tried and tested strategies no longer worked, collaborative practice, including co-ordinated inquiry and TL were fundamental. Thus, it was argued that DL had a particular importance in underpinning this process.

Finally, the data for research question 3, indicated for the most part, positive outcomes of DL in relation to school improvement. Firstly, DL was perceived to have positive outcomes for

school leadership through increased motivation, retention of staff and capacity building. However, a few negative outcomes, including increased workload and lack of clarity of roles, leading to inconsistency and inefficiency, were voiced. DL was also felt to impact positively on teaching and learning, by building capacity to meet the needs of complex learners: it led to new learning opportunities through TL, improved practice and knowledge creation through sharing, collaboration, and the development of specialist approaches. There were, however, divergent views on broader pupil outcomes, although individual pupils achieved success through personalised programmes linked to TL.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

In this concluding chapter the research purpose and broad research questions will be restated and the key findings within each will be summarised. The findings of research questions 2 and 3 will be examined in relation to the wider literature, reviewed through research question 1, to show how the results, enhance the understanding of the field of investigation. The limitations of the study will then be considered along with its contributions to knowledge. The chapter will conclude with a consideration of the recommendations of the study, including recommendations for further research.

#### 5.2 Research Purpose and Design

The aim of this study was to explore the perceptions of school leaders about the role of DL in managing change and school improvement in three special schools. Data was collected using twenty semi-structured interviews, which was triangulated through the observation of each participant in a meeting. The participants included the Headteacher of each school along with seven senior leaders, four middle leaders, and six teacher leaders. The use of semi-structured interviews, supported by observations, provided thick data about the perceptions of leaders regarding the role of DL in change and school improvement in special education.

#### 5.3 Research Questions

The above aim was translated into three broad research questions:

1. What is meant by distributed leadership, school improvement and change in the context of school leadership, with a particular focus on special schools?
2. What insights do school leaders' accounts give us into how they experience managing change through distributed leadership?
3. What are school leaders' perceptions of the outcomes of distributed leadership in securing improvement?

#### 5.4 Assessment of Findings

In this section the key findings to each of the research questions will be presented.

##### 5.4.1 Research Question 1: What is meant by distributed leadership, school improvement and change in the context of school leadership, with a particular focus on special schools?

###### *Definitions of DL*

The literature is clear that there is little agreement about what is meant by DL (Bennett *et al.*, 2003). It includes the work of formal and informal leaders (Harris, 2004; Spillane, 2006) and thus incorporates TL (Harris and Lambert, 2003; Muijs and Harris, 2003), so that every person at every level can potentially be a leader (Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee, 2002). It takes different forms, which Spillane (2006) classifies as division of labour, co- performance and parallel performance, and Gronn (2002a) identifies as additive and concertive action. It is also closely related to other models of leadership such as dispersed, collaborative, shared and distributive leadership (Oduro, 2004) which share the common characteristic that leadership is not the domain of one person. Within this diverse literature Bennett *et al.* (2003, p.3) identified four main areas of agreement: first, DL is 'a group activity that works through and within relationships'; second, it is an emergent activity within a group; third, it is characterised

by open leadership boundaries and finally by a range of expertise which is distributed across many individuals. Spillane (2006, p.14) however, argued that whilst DL ,which he described as ‘the interaction of leaders, followers and the situation’, is related to other forms of shared leadership, , it is distinct in so far as ‘the situation is not simply a context within which school leaders’ practice; it is a defining element of practice’ (Spillane, 2006, p.22). Thus, distribution is affected by leadership routine, type and size of school, and the developmental stage of leadership teams (Spillane, 2006). This was central to the research.

### *Models of leadership*

The literature contained several taxonomies which were used in data analysis. Firstly, MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse’s (2005) model identified a continuum of types of distribution which relates to the context and culture of the school and the career stage of the Headteacher, which was of relevance to the contexts of the three schools. Secondly, Ritchie and Woods’ (2007) model, identified degrees to which distribution was embedded and thirdly, Telford’s (1996) framework for collaborative leadership. Woods (2016) typology of social authority and Harris’ (2009a) model of DL were also used. Within these models the role of school culture was prominent in determining the nature of DL.

### *Teacher leadership*

Closely related to DL was the concept of TL which Muijs and Harris (2003) argued was narrower than DL because it related only to teachers but was broader because it existed beyond leadership roles and showed how DL operated in schools. In common with DL, definitions of TL were broad. York-Barr and Duke (2004, p.288) summarised the key elements of these diverse definitions which were based on influence as follows: ‘TL is the process by which

teacher leaders individually and collectively influence their colleagues, principals and other members of school communities, improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student achievement.' Fairfield and MacKenzie (2012) encapsulated these differences within their *Spheres of Teacher Leadership Action for Learning* which was used in analysing data.

### *Culture*

School culture was viewed as critical within the development of DL in all the above models. Harris and Lambert, (2003), Muijs and Harris, (2003) and Danielson (2006) contended that it determined the extent to which teachers were able to develop leadership skills through a culture based on respect, where teachers feel safe to take risks. Bolman and Deal (1991) and Danielson (2006) saw culture as dynamic and recognised the role of all staff in its formation. However, Schein (1985) viewed the role of the Headteacher as fundamental in determining school culture based on trust (Bryk and Schneider, 2002; MacBeath, 2005).

### *Role of senior leadership teams*

Senior teams played a central role in DL within the literature. Wallace (2001) considered that the key to their success lay in high levels of synergy, which meant that senior leaders and headteachers could be committed to equality of contribution but remain flexible enough to return to a hierarchical position when agreement could not be reached. Like Wallace (2001), Bush and Glover (2012, p.33) saw DL within senior leadership teams as a mixture of 'solo and team leadership' in both mainstream and special schools. Typically, they found that senior leaders were appointed internally, had shared key values and purpose and good interpersonal relationships. This related closely to the findings from this research.

### *The role of the Headteacher*

The role of the Headteacher, in relation to DL featured widely in the literature. Copland (2003), MacBeath (2005), Murphy *et al.* (2009), Harris, (2009a; 2013) and Torrance (2013) identified significant challenges posed to headteachers in terms of their changing role. Wallace (2001) also identified risks for headteachers who remained accountable for school performance.

There were staunchly opposed views around issues of power and authority within DL. Thus, whilst Harris (2003b; 2004) argued that power and authority were redistributed, and Jackson (2003) contended that leadership was given by those who were led, with the Headteacher taking on a co-ordinating role, aligning it towards a common purpose, others (Hatcher, 2005; Hartley, 2009) argued that power and authority could not be separated. Lumby (2013) meanwhile contended that far from empowering teachers DL led to increased workload and accountability thereby sustaining inequalities. In contrast to these critics, however, Woods (2016) took a different view seeing power as social authority.

Nevertheless, Headteachers were almost universally viewed as pivotal in implementing, supporting, and sustaining DL (Leithwood *et al.*, 2006; Hallinger and Heck, 2009; Harris, 2009a). One aspect of this was in creating the conditions for DL (Murphy *et al.*, 2009; Harris, 2011; Smylie and Eckert, 2017) and developing leadership in others. Klar *et al.*'s (2016) model for the development of leadership capacity was used to analyse how this occurred within the sample schools. The literature (Harris and Lambert, 2003; Muijs and Harris, 2006; Wenner and Campbell 2017) identified effective ways of developing leadership through in-house opportunities such as mentoring or leading groups. Klein *et al.* (2018) also explored the role

of university mentors in developing TL which related closely to the E-Mentors group in School 1.

Another key role of the Headteacher involved the development of structures and routines to provide a deeper pool of leadership (Leithwood, 2006; Murphy *et al.*, 2009). Harris, (2009a) stressed the need for 'fluid and organic' structures. There was widespread agreement in the literature (Harris and Lambert, 2003; Muijs and Harris, 2006; Wenner and Campbell, 2017) regarding the importance of supportive routines which provided time for collaborative processes.

#### *Criticisms of DL*

A section of the literature was critical of DL. One strand which included Hatcher (2005), Fitzgerald and Gunter (2006), Hartley (2007), Hargreaves and Fink (2008) and Murphy *et al.* (2009), contended that DL was a political phenomenon, used to deliver government policy through distribution in the performing school.

#### *DL in special education*

The literature around DL in special education was sparse and stemmed mostly from international contexts. York Barr *et al.*, (2005) argued that all teachers in special schools acted as teacher leaders because of the increased responsibility around statutory responsibilities. Billingsley (2007) found that an important aspect of TL involved the induction and mentoring of new teachers which developed leadership capacity. Schechter and Feldman (2013) contended that the challenges of meeting complex individual needs required a commitment to professional learning through PLCs. In addition, multidisciplinary approaches required a collaborative approach. In a similar vein, Smeets and Ponte (2009) focused on the role of



action research which was facilitated by headteachers and a culture of openness amongst teachers. The importance of frequent interaction between teachers and the Headteacher in developing TL, also raised the centrality of Headteachers as catalysts for TL in special education, as in the broader literature.

As with international studies, the Children and Families Act (2014) advocated sharing expertise through learning networks in England. Carpenter (2016b) contended that teachers should be inquirers to secure engagement for complex learners. This suggested a particular relevance of TL for special education in facilitating this process.

#### *DL, change and school improvement*

The past decade has seen considerable change in the role of special schools, both in terms of statutory requirements, such as the SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2015b) and the Rochford Review (STA, 2016) and most significantly the increasing complexity of its learners (Carpenter *et al.*, 2011). Against this background there are conflicting views about the role of DL in directly securing school improvement (Harris *et al.*, 2007; Leithwood *et al.*, 2007; Mayrowetz, 2008; Hallinger and Heck, 2009; Robinson, 2009). Some studies however, (Muijs and Harris, 2003; Hallinger and Heck, 2009; Harris, 2009a) argued that the complex processes at work within DL were widely linked to school improvement strategies, whilst enhancing DL simultaneously.

Collaborative cultures, which were associated with school improvement (Rozenholtz, 1989; Muijs and Harris, 2003; Poerkert *et al.*, 2016) were considered by Harris and Lambert (2003) to be at the heart of TL as part of their concept of Constructivist Leadership. Harris and Lambert (2003) argued that PLCs, as well as leading to improvement, enhanced DL through increased involvement and ownership by teachers. Trust, which underpinned DL was

associated with organisational improvement (Bryk and Schneider, 2002; Spillane, 2006; Covey and Merrill, 2008, cited in Harris 2014). Harris (2014) argued that social capital was at the heart of DL and TL, whilst a wide swathe of the literature (Harris and Lambert, 2003; Fairman and MacKenzie, 2015; Spillane, 2015; Poekert, Alexandrou and Shannon, 2016; Klein *et al.*, 2018) contended that these relationships enabled teachers to take risks and led to school improvement. One of the most significant benefits claimed for DL was capacity building which Harris and Lambert (2003), Leithwood and Riehl (2003) and Harris (2014) stated contributed to school improvement. Specifically, Harris (2014) claimed that DL provided the framework for knowledge creation and innovation.

The literature identified some direct outcomes of DL: both positive and negative. Wenner and Campbell (2017) identified positive outcomes in the form of increased confidence, improved teaching, and a positive impact on colleagues. It was also recognised that DL brought about increased workload and stress for those in classroom roles, as well as difficulties in relationships with peers. A significant outcome of DL was increased motivation (Muijs and Harris, 2003; Donaldson, 2007; Wenner and Campbell, 2017). This featured widely in the literature around special education, where attrition of young teachers was reduced (Billingsley, 2004) and induction and mentoring (Whitaker, 2000) and collegial cultures (Singh and Billingsley, 1998) promoted teacher retention.

In exploring links between student outcomes and DL the literature was sparse. Some studies found that links were mediated by other factors such as teacher motivation (Leithwood and Mascall, 2008). However, Hallinger and Heck (1996) recognised that it was difficult to establish direct links because of the multiplicity of factors impacting on students' lives, whilst others

(Wenner and Campbell, 2017) found no links, and Muijs and Harris (2006) urged caution. In overcoming these complexities Robinson (2009) contended that leadership indicators should focus on practices which research found most likely to impact on student outcomes.

#### 5.4.2 Research Question 2: What insights do school leaders' accounts give us into how they experience managing change through distributed leadership?

*DL was manifested differently in each school.*

All participants perceived DL as a multi-faceted phenomenon which underpinned the way the three schools operated, reflecting the range of definitions in the literature (Bennett *et al.*, 2003; Spillane, 2006; Harris, 2007) There were, however, significant differences in the nature, extent of, and mechanisms of distribution between the schools. These differences were conceptualised into a model of distribution which reflected aspects of Telford's (1996), MacBeath's (2005), Ritchie and Woods' (2007), Harris' (2009a), and Woods' (2016) taxonomies (Figure 19). However, as identified by MacBeath (2005) each school exhibited characteristics of other categories of distribution.

The mode of distribution in School 1 was described as **Co-ordinated Distribution**, which was a term used by the Headteacher to describe his role. Whilst having a clear hierarchy the school displayed characteristics of MacBeath's (2005) Incremental Distribution and focused on development and transformation. It reflected evidence of Embedded Distribution (Ritchie and Woods, 2007), high levels of Collaborative Leadership (Telford, 1996), democratic and communal authority (Woods, 2016), and empowerment with deeply co-ordinated practice (Harris, 2009a).

The mode of distribution in School 2 was described as **Organic Distribution**, which was a term used by participants to describe the way in which change, and development took place. The school had a flat staffing structure and closely resembled Telford's (1996) collaborative leadership, MacBeath's (2005) Cultural Distribution, Ritchie and Woods' (2007) Embedded Distribution, and Harris' (2009a) Autonomous Distribution.

The mode of distribution in School 3 was identified as **Formal Hierarchical Distribution** and shared many of the characteristics of MacBeath's (2005) Formal Distribution, with an emphasis on accountability and performance. However, the hierarchical structures did not pose a barrier to DL as contended by Jackson (2003), Hatcher (2005), Ritchie and Woods (2007), and Klein *et al.* (2018) as the Headteacher used her new Mini-School structure to develop cultures of teamwork and increase teacher empowerment.

#### *Understanding differences in distribution*

It was argued that the differences in DL could be understood through the interaction of the following factors:

1. School context: the career stage of the Headteacher and leaders and school background.

The context of each school, which included its size, history, and the career path of the Headteacher, and leaders was argued to influence the nature of distribution as contended by Spillane (2006). Thus, the Co-ordinated Distribution in School 1 reflected the fact that the Headteacher, was newly appointed and in his early years of headship but had served with the previous Headteacher (leaders), the school was going through a period of rapid expansion which needed careful co-ordination (situation) and staff were highly committed within a long-

established collaborative culture based on shared values (followers). Similarly, the Organic Distribution in School 2 reflected the fact that the Headteacher and leaders were long serving and had co-constructed the collaborative and consensual culture under the previous Headteacher (leaders), the small size of the school supported close relationships and a shared ethos (situation), and the involvement of the longstanding staff in building the school culture (followers). Finally, the Formal Hierarchical Distribution in School 3 reflected the fact that the Headteacher had inherited a complex situation (situation), both herself and all senior and middle leaders were new to post (leaders) and staff were in the process of adapting to significant change (followers).

## 2. The Role of the Headteacher

The Headteacher was perceived in all schools to be central to the way that leadership was distributed (Leithwood *et al.*, 2006; Hallinger and Heck, 2009; Harris, 2009b). Headteachers retained responsibility for the identification of moral purpose, vision, direction setting and did not distribute all areas of leadership (Murphy *et al.*, 2009). They then used school routines, such as meeting schedules or working groups, to invite others to input on identified issues, using leaders' expertise which they in turn co-ordinated (Harris, 2004; MacBeath, 2005; Woods, 2016). SMT meetings were particularly important in this context. Thus, Headteachers maintained a high degree of control and determined the extent of distribution.

However, the relationship between power and empowerment was complex. While all participants reported high degrees of freedom to make decisions in areas of formal responsibility, Headteachers drew 'red lines' and sometimes 'pulled rank' when ideas were put forward which were not in line with the direction of the school. This was respected by

other leaders (Wallace, 2001). Headteachers also recognised the risk posed by DL in view of their accountability for school performance (Wallace, 2001). Therefore, leaders and staff were held to account through formal systems and day-to-day communication. However, teachers also put in place self-checking mechanisms by running ideas past their teams and the Headteacher before acting based on good relationships, suggesting that leadership was at least in part conferred (Jackson, 2003), could be separated from power (Gronn, 2000) and was not solely part of a power-based relationship (Hatcher, 2005; Lumby, 2013). The same good relationships based on trust also meant that accountability processes were supportive and developmental (Schein, 1985; Muijs and Harris, 2006; Murphy et al., 2009; Brundrett and Rhodes, 2014).

An important part of the Headteacher's role in all schools was the development and support of leadership through strategies which included attending external courses and commissioning bespoke training. However, a significant amount of training took place internally and encouraged TL. The range of in-house opportunities was wide and varied, and included buddying new teachers (Billingsley, 2007) and participating in School Improvement and working groups (Muijs and Harris, 2006). A common practice was for both formal and teacher leaders to attend external training and then train and coach other staff, which had a motivating impact. Schools also trained support staff to become teachers through the Schools Direct Programme, some of whom went on to become senior leaders. Whilst in School 1 a partnership was developed with a local university which supported mentoring, collaborative inquiry – a strategy described by Billingsley (2007) – and leadership development opportunities. These practices reflected the lack of adequate teacher training and externally provided CPD identified by Male and Rayner (2007) as well as the lack of leadership training

in special education found by Power, Rayner and Gunter (2001) They also showed the importance of the special education context in underpinning leadership development through DL.

### 3. Strong cultures built on core values of meeting pupils' needs through collaboration and TL

All sample schools had all-pervasive, strong, positive cultures, based on close relationships, which were commonly described as 'families' by participants. Reflecting this sense of belonging, several participants expressed concern that rapid school growth impacted on the 'core' of the school. Cultures were underpinned by core values around meeting the complex needs of pupils, which had a powerful unifying and motivating influence on staff. These cultures were developed by the Headteacher (Schein, 1985) and senior leaders (Murphy *et al.*, 2009) but were also shaped by middle and teacher leaders in their daily work (Telford, 1996). In line with these values, Headteachers, whilst being mindful of Ofsted, saw pupil needs as the principal driver of change, which was contrary to that section of the literature which viewed DL as a way of delivering government policy (Hatcher, 2005; Fitzgerald and Gunter, 2006; Hartley, 2007; Murphy *et al.*, 2009; and Klein *et al.*, 2018).

A key element of the cultures of the sample schools was a commitment to teamwork, collaborative practice and TL within which headteachers acted as catalysts (Harris and Lambert, 2003). Collaborative practice took on a variety of guises which differed between schools and included formal collaboration through meetings and structures, multidisciplinary partnerships, individually led TL and collaborative inquiry as part of a PLC. It was argued that the prominence of collaborative approaches and TL stemmed from the need to provide

individually tailored programmes of learning (Schechter and Feldman, 2013) to meet the needs of pupils with CLDD (Carpenter *et al.*, 2011). It was further contended that DL provided the enabling framework for this to happen (Harris 2009a).

#### 4. Complex pupil needs in special school context.

It was argued that the complexity of pupil needs was critical in determining the nature of DL in the three sample special schools, and permeated the factors identified above. Thus, pupil needs were the prime driver of school improvement in all schools and underpinned moral purpose, core values and school culture. All schools were also experiencing rising rolls, which led to expansion and was perceived as a potential threat to school culture. This increase mirrored the national rise in the number of pupils with CLDD (Carpenter *et al.*, 2011) over recent years. It was argued that the need to find new strategies for these pupils, for whom tried and tested approaches no longer worked, underpinned collaborative approaches and TL. Similarly, the need for leadership to be built on a firm understanding of pupil needs supported in-house leadership development and internal leadership appointments. Thus, it was contended that DL provided Harris' (2009a, p.253) 'organisational circuitry' to meet complex pupil needs in the special school context.

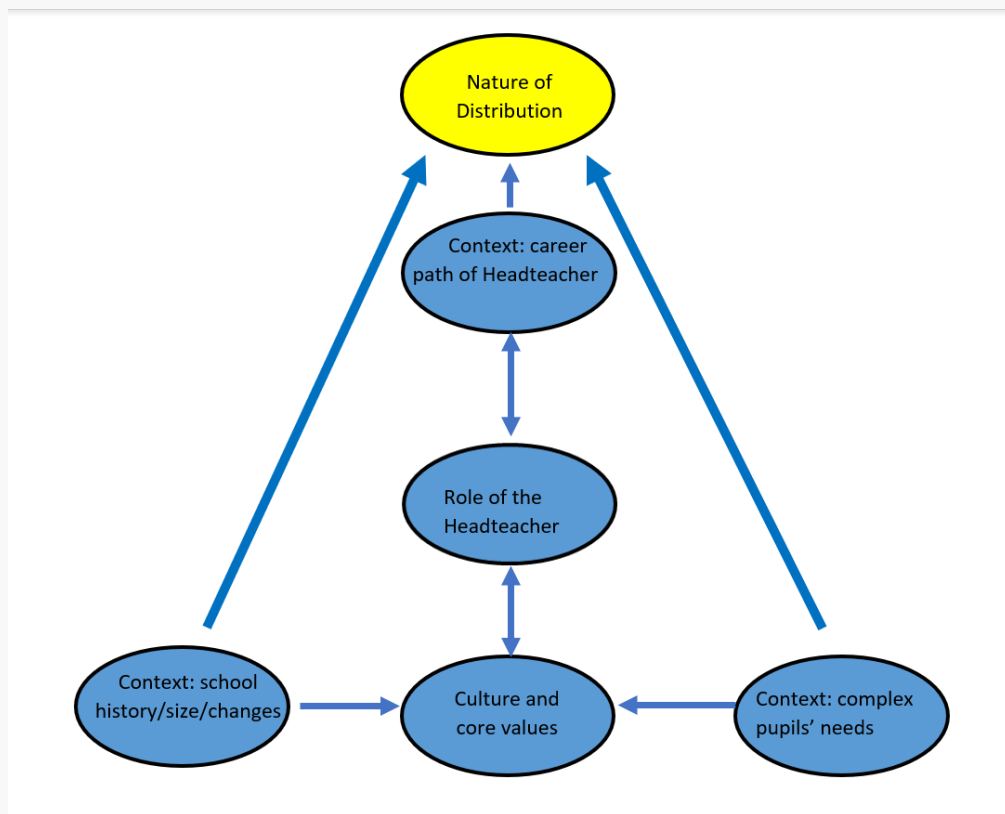
#### *A conceptual framework*

The conceptual framework below (Figure 21) summarises the interaction of the above factors which determined the nature of DL in the sample schools. Where arrows connect factors (blue ellipses) directly to the nature of distribution (yellow ellipse), I felt those factors, had a direct impact – namely the career path of the Headteacher, school context and the complex needs of pupils. The Headteacher determined overall direction of the school and his/her career path



was highly influential in deciding the form that distribution took. Therefore, these two ellipses have been placed in the centre of the triangle. School culture and core values underpinned the processes at work within a distributed framework and have therefore been placed centrally at the base of the triangle. Some arrows reflect interacting influences, such as the way in which school culture was influenced by pupil needs, school context and the Headteacher.

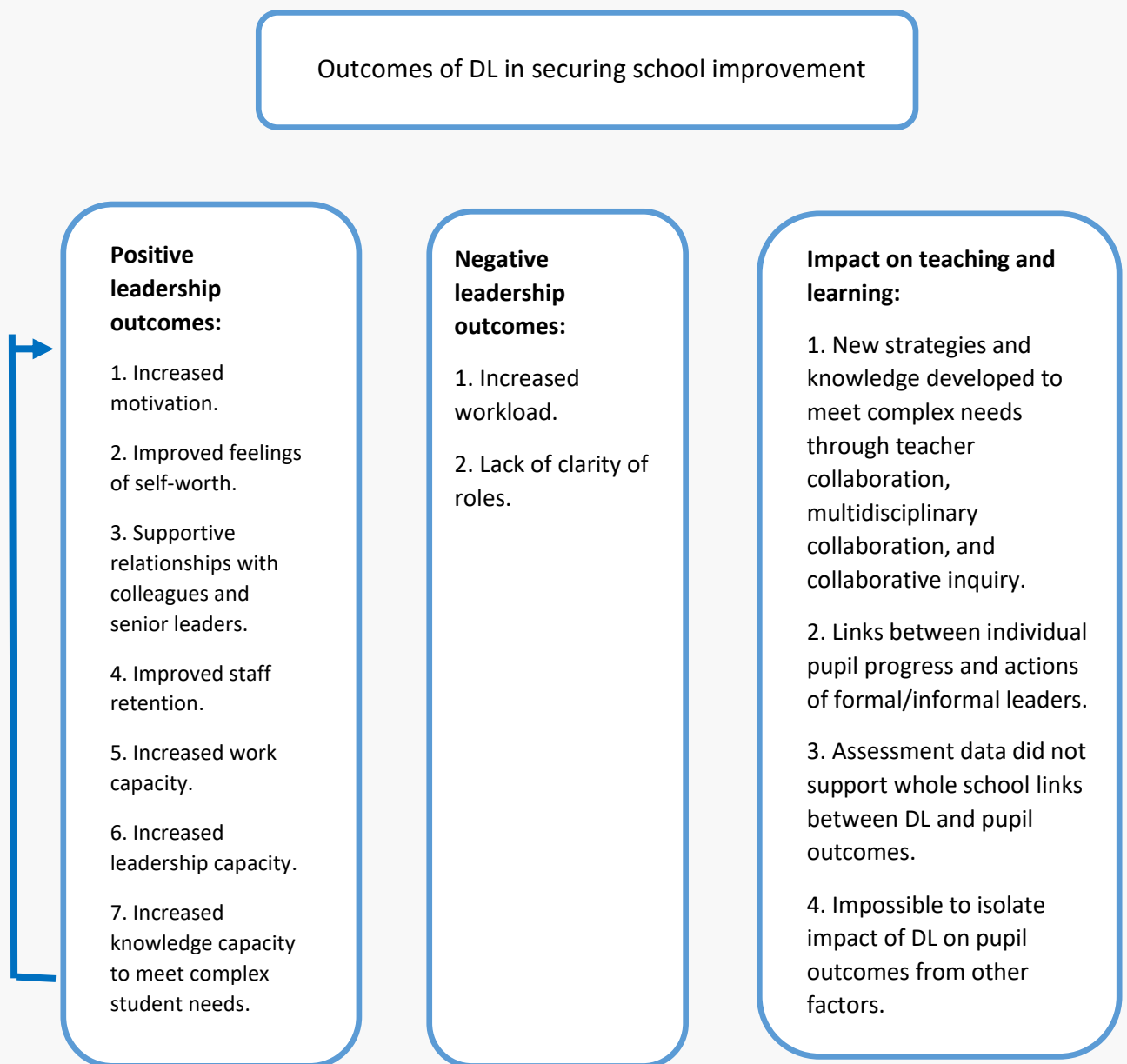
**Figure 21: A conceptual framework: principal factors determining the nature of Distributed Leadership in sample schools.**



**5.4.3 Research Question 3: What are school leaders’ perceptions of the outcomes of distributed leadership in securing school improvement?**

An overview of the impact of DL in securing school improvement is shown in Figure22 below. The findings focused on two areas: impact on leadership and impact on teaching and learning.

**Figure 22: Summary of impact of Distributed Leadership on school improvement.**



Participants in all schools felt that DL increased motivation by the sense of challenge and ownership which came with empowerment. Supportive relationships with colleagues and senior managers who met staff's emotional needs were central to this (Singh and Billingsley, 1998; Gersten *et al.*, 2001). Thus, participants reflected feelings of increased self-worth as well

as being valued by senior leaders (Muijs and Harris, 2003). Where DL was deeply embedded within collaborative cultures, increased motivation also translated into high staff retention (Singh and Billingsley, 1998). This did not support the findings of Whitaker (2000). Other positive outcomes of DL included increased organisational work capacity (Harris *et al.*, 2007; Male and Rayner, 2007; Torrance, 2013; Brundrett and Rhodes, 2014) and increased individual leadership capacity (Poekert, Alexandrou and Shannon, 2016; Wenner and Campbell, 2017).

Participants identified fewer negative outcomes: namely increased workload, and lack of clarity of roles. However, supportive, trust-based cultures which Muijs and Harris (2006) contended should underpin TL, meant that leaders and teachers were flexible in managing and accepting these issues. Thus, managers and colleagues stepped in to ease the log jam, acting as a regulating mechanism where necessary and staff were able to accept unresolved difficulties around clarity of roles, in contrast to the views of Storey (2004), Klar *et al.* (2016), and Hirsh and Segolsson, (2019).

DL provided the framework (Harris, 2014), for collaborative practice between teachers (Muijs and Harris, 2003; Harris *et al.*, 2007; Hallinger and Heck, 2009) who shared resources, planning, strategies and engaged in collaborative inquiry as part of a PLC to meet the complex needs of learners. Collaboration also occurred between teachers and therapists which supported the development of new strategies and knowledge (Harris, 2009a). A significant outcome was the creation of new knowledge through collaborative inquiry which was critical in meeting pupil needs (Billingsley, 2007; Schechter and Feldman, 2013; Carpenter, 2016), made more essential by inadequate government training (Power, Rayner and Gunter, 2001). All these outcomes had direct links with school improvement (Harris, 2014; Fairman and

Mackenzie, 2015), whilst raising motivation as part of cyclical process (Copland, 2003; Harris, 2014). The centrality of collaboration to school culture, based on learner needs, was an indicator of the important role of DL in special education.

Some leaders identified broad links, such as Ofsted gradings, between DL and improved pupil outcomes, however, whole school data had not been analysed to support or negate this claim. Others agreed with Hallinger and Heck (1996), that it was not possible to link progress to any form of leadership because of the many factors at play in pupils' lives. However, convincing arguments were made for links between DL and individual progress where leaders in formal and informal roles had trained staff, having attended specialist external specialist courses, in strategies which underpinned positive progress measured through IEPs, data sheets and SMT monitoring. Individual teacher led initiatives also supported individual progress. Finally, collaborative inquiry was shown to support individual engagement and learning (Harris and Lambert, 2003).

### **5.5 Contributions to the Field of Knowledge**

This research can make several contributions to the field of knowledge around DL in the context of managing change and school development and its outcomes in securing school improvement. The principal contribution of the research is that it represents a first attempt to explore these concepts through the perceptions and experiences of leaders in special education in England. Additional contributions include:

1. The research represents a starting point for exploring perceptions and experiences of DL in special education in England, both at a broad level and more specifically in

- relation to ongoing policy agendas around school improvement and increasing complexity of pupil needs.
2. The research evidenced the diverse nature of DL in special education, in line with findings in mainstream schools, and showed that it was a multi-faceted phenomenon, which ran deeply through the three organisations.
  3. In understanding this diversity, the study found that the nature of DL in each school was determined by interaction between four key factors : first, school context including, the career path of the Headteacher, the school's history and ongoing change, in line with Spillane (2006) and MacBeath (2005); second, the role of the Headteacher; third, positive school cultures underpinned by close relationships which motivated staff to engage within a distributed perspective through teamwork and collaborative practice; fourth, the challenge of meeting complex pupil needs. A Model of Distribution was developed which reflected this relationship and accounted for differences in distribution between the three schools.
  4. Complex pupil needs defined the nature of leadership development, which focused on in-house training, led by both formal and teacher leaders, as part of the way in which leadership was distributed. It was common practice for leaders to attend external specialist courses and on return to school lead training, supported by mentoring, across the organisation. This reflected a low level of SEND training within initial teacher training programmes (Male and Rayner, 2007). This practice, which was related to the special school context, meant that DL was effective in developing leadership capacity across all three schools.

5. In a similar way, all schools engaged in the practice of 'growing their own' teachers, whereby skilled teaching assistants, trained to become teachers through Schools Direct, with in-house mentoring provided by formal and informal leaders. This again reflected the impact of the complex nature of pupil needs on DL and limited coverage of CLLD in initial teacher training programmes.
6. DL in the sample schools was characterised by high levels of collaborative practice and TL. This took a variety of forms and included multidisciplinary partnership and collaborative inquiry, sometimes in partnership with a university as part of a whole school commitment to research, such as the E-Mentors group in School 1. These practices, which were promoted by the Headteacher and part of the school culture, engaged expertise across the organisation and facilitated high levels of TL to identify personalised approaches which enabled complex learners to engage. Thus, DL impacted on teaching and learning practice as part of school improvement.
7. Headteachers played a key role in implementing, developing and sustaining DL, although their role differed between schools. All three headteachers were responsible for the leadership of policy and 'pulled rank' on colleagues if developments were not in line with the direction of the school. However, in schools 1 and 2, where DL was more embedded, Headteachers were often led in the development of policy and practice by the interests and specialist knowledge of formal or teacher leaders. In these scenarios Headteachers acted as co-ordinators.

## 5.6 Limitations of the Study

This study comprised of 20 participants: three headteachers, seven senior leaders, four middle leaders and six teacher leaders. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and was triangulated by observations of each participant in a meeting within the school meeting schedule. The fact that participants came from a small sample of three special schools in a limited geographical area, meant that findings could not be generalised, although as outlined in chapter 3, it was possible to make analytical generalisation. In addition, the interpretative approach used, limited the transferability of findings. Nevertheless, this was felt to be well-suited to the aims of the research and provided a starting point for exploring DL in special education.

Due to the scope of the project and support staff contracts, a decision was made not to include the latter as a discrete group in the study. Similarly, therapists who were not based on site were excluded from the study due their availability. In future research it would be useful to explore groups such as these.

Finally, whilst the participants in two of the schools who were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews were keen to do so, in one of the schools take up was low. As a result, a smaller number of leaders participated, however, as all groups of leaders were represented it was felt that adequate data could be gathered.

In exploring whether there were links between leadership distribution and pupil outcomes, several participants contended that DL had a positive impact. In two of the schools participants reasoned that strategies, such as SCERTS (Prizant *et al.*, 2006) or TEACCH (Autism Independent UK, 2010) had been developed through training and mentoring as part of

leaders' areas of leadership distribution. These strategies informed individual programmes followed by students, with outcomes being tracked through IEPs or progress databases linked to input. Others evidenced positive outcomes because of teacher led interventions with individual pupils. Thus, the impact of DL was mediated through strategies put in place to improve learning through engagement. However, time constraints and the scope and methodology of this study, with its focus on teacher perceptions, did not allow for an analysis of IEP outcomes, which would have been needed to draw more definitive conclusions. However, these findings offer a potential starting point for further research.

### **5.7 Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations**

This research highlighted participants' perceptions that DL had a positive impact on school improvement, by building leadership capacity, motivating teachers, reducing staff turnover, and improving teaching and learning through the creation and sharing of new knowledge. Most participants felt this impacted positively on pupil outcomes, although they recognised that data was not always available to support perceptions. Thus, DL was perceived to have more benefits than disadvantages. The nature of distribution varied between schools and was determined by the interplay of school context, including the career path of the Headteacher and leaders, the role of the Headteacher, school culture and the challenge of meeting the needs of pupils with CLDD. Pupil needs underpinned the core values of the schools, which unified staff, supported a culture of teamwork, collaboration, and positive relationships, which predicated school development. Complex student needs also underpinned the mechanisms of DL especially TL, collaborative inquiry, the high profile of specialist in-house training and the practice by schools of growing their own teachers. Whilst Headteachers



retained some areas of leadership for themselves, which reflected their accountability for the school, their role was also about co-ordinating expertise, but remained central.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations can be made which will be relevant to headteachers and leaders, service commissioners, policy makers involved in developing leadership training and researchers of leadership in special education.

1. One of the aims of this study was to further develop my understanding of DL, as part of a personal journey. As a new Headteacher I had completed NPQH, was committed to DL, but remained unprepared for the rigours of Headship. In addition, NPQH made little reference to special education. By contrast I found the research design adopted, which included the perspectives of a cross section of leaders, with opportunities for reflection through the interpretive process, in a real-life setting, provided an excellent basis for understanding leadership through DL. Since this thesis concluded that the Headteacher had a central role to play in developing and sustaining DL, I would recommend the completion of a similar research project, within special education, as part of preparation for Headship to government training providers.
2. This thesis concluded that the challenge of meeting pupils' complex needs played a key role in determining the nature of distribution. As such it promoted TL - including links with universities, through collaborative inquiry and the research process - which in turn had the additional benefit of building leadership capacity, creating knowledge and increasing motivation. The focus on inquiry was also recognised by the recommendations of Carpenter *et al.*'s (2011) CLDD research. In view of the variety of TL and collaborative

practice, I would recommend the sharing of practice between special schools through conferences and school networking.

3. Positive cultures, which were built on teamwork and professional relationships, and focused on the need to meet complex pupil needs, underpinned DL in the three special schools. Because of the dominant role of school culture, combined with the differences between schools and the role of Headteachers, in building cultures, I would recommend networking opportunities for trainee, new and established Headteachers.
4. Multidisciplinary collaboration was fundamental to meeting complex pupil needs and operated differently in all three schools. In School 1 therapists were fully integrated within the school structure and culture and were empowered to lead both formally and informally through leadership distribution within the school. This partnership reflects the philosophy and aspirations of the Children and Families Act (2014) which is embodied in law and requires a new way of working for professionals. Thus, I would recommend the sharing of practice between all those involved in delivering, planning, and commissioning provision within education, health, and social care.
5. It was argued by several participants that DL promoted positive pupil outcomes. Whilst school wide data could not support this, a strong argument was made that initiatives, which resulted from both formal and informal distribution, were evidenced to have a positive impact on outcomes for individuals through lesson observations and IEPs. Given the lack of empirical studies in this area, further research is needed.
6. It was identified that a limitation of this study was that it focused on leaders within the teacher workforce and excluded teaching assistants, parents and other stakeholders and professionals. Many of these partnerships were touched on, but it was not within the

scope of this study to include them. In view of the importance of joined-up child centred working, this is an area which would benefit from further research.

The thesis has evidenced both similarities and differences between three special schools in a small geographical area, in the way that DL was perceived to operate and its impact on leadership, teaching and learning. It has been argued that its findings will be of interest to leaders in schools, service commissioners, training providers, policy makers and researchers of special education. In drawing the thesis to a close, it must be remembered, that the findings of such a small interpretivist study cannot be generalised, particularly in the light of the importance of context. However, it opens a significant area for future research with rich opportunities for improvement within special education policy and practice through sharing good practice.

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## Appendix A

Headteacher pack: invitation to participate in research, participant information sheet, expression of interest sheet and consent form.



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION AND  
SOCIAL JUSTICE

[Date]

Dear Headteacher

### **Invitation to participate in special school leadership research**

I am a research student at the University of Birmingham, studying for an Ed. D. in Leaders and Leadership in Education. I have worked in special education for 18 years in a variety of roles which include class teacher, home school liaison officer, subject leader, deputy head and headteacher, and would like to invite you to participate in my doctoral research project about special school leadership.

The past two decades have seen a raft of changes in education generally, as well as those specific to special education, which have transformed the educational landscape. The same period has also seen the introduction of distributed leadership into the way that schools are run. In my research, I want to find out about leaders' perceptions and experience of distributed leadership in special education and whether this way of working has supported school development and the management of change in any way. Very little research has previously been conducted in this area. I hope therefore that this will contribute to our understanding of special school leadership and the management of change and school development in the current educational environment.

**The research will involve** carrying out interviews which will last for approximately 45 minutes with yourself, and 6 other leaders to find out about their experiences and perceptions in these areas. I would also like to observe the way in which these leaders work by observing a meeting in which each individual participates, such as a senior, middle or team meeting. Participants, apart from yourself, will be identified through a recruitment questionnaire, which will be open to all members of the teaching establishment of your school, in which they will be asked to identify up to three individuals who they would approach for advice on professional matters. Through this process I will aim to recruit 2 senior leaders, 2 middle leaders and 2 teachers who have no formal responsibility outside

their classroom role to take part in the study. In order to introduce the project to teachers and complete the recruitment questionnaire, I would ask for a 30-minute slot at a prescheduled full staff meeting.

I have attached a **Participant Information Sheet** which covers key information about the conduct of the project.

If you are interested in participating in this project please complete the expression of interest form attached and I will contact you to arrange a time when I can meet with you to discuss the project further.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Kind regards,

Carolyn Davis

Contact:

Researcher, Carolyn Davis. Doctoral Student, [cad254@bham.ac.uk](mailto:cad254@bham.ac.uk)

Supervisor, Dr Tracy Whatmore, [t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk](mailto:t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk)



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## **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (HEADTEACHER)**

---

### **Background**

Your school is invited to take part in this research project, which is part of my doctoral programme of study – Leaders and Leadership in Education Doctorate Ed. D. – at the University of Birmingham. Before you decide to part, please take a moment to read the following and do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The aim of my study is to explore the experiences and perceptions of leaders in special schools in managing change and securing school improvement. The study will include leaders at all levels within the school, including head teachers, middle leaders and class teachers.

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

The study has been approved by the University of Birmingham Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Review Committee.

### **Why have I been chosen?**

We invite your participation as we are seeking information from special school leaders who are in a position to reflect on their experience of leading and managing change and securing school improvement.

### **What does participation involve?**

If you agree for your school to take part in this project, we would like to invite yourself and 6 other leaders to take part in an interview, at a time and location convenient to you, lasting approximately 45 minutes, to find out about your own, and their experiences and perceptions in these areas. I would also like to observe the way in which these leaders work by observing a meeting in which each individual participates, such as a senior, middle or team meeting. Participants, apart from yourself, will be identified through a recruitment questionnaire, which will be open to all members of the teaching establishment of your school, in which they will be asked to identify up to three individuals who they would approach for advice on professional matters. Through this process I will aim to recruit 2 senior leaders, 2 middle leaders and 2 teachers who have no formal responsibility outside

their classroom role to take part in the study. In order to introduce the project to teachers and complete the recruitment questionnaire I would ask for a 30-minute slot at a prescheduled full staff meeting.

### **What will I get from this study?**

This may be an interesting opportunity for you to reflect on the role of yourself and other leaders at your school in securing school improvement and supporting the management of change. If you would like, I can provide a summary of my findings for you.

### **Can I withdraw from the study?**

Your participation in this research project is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time during the research without question. Any request to withdraw should be put in writing to the researcher whose details are provided below. Following your withdrawal from the study, any information you or your staff have already provided will not be used in analysis or final report, and any record of the data provided by you or your staff will subsequently be destroyed.

### **What if there is something I am not happy about?**

If you have any concerns please contact the researcher whose details follow. Should you wish to make a formal complaint, please contact my supervisor who will take the matter forward for you:

Dr Tracy Whatmore, [t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk](mailto:t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk)

### **Good Practice and Research Quality**

All data remains confidential. Individual names or identifying features of schools will not be made available in any publication or to any organisation or to any individual and any reference made to participants will be via a code. Data will be stored securely in accordance with the University's Code of Practice for Research [http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/cods/docs/COP\\_Research](http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/cods/docs/COP_Research) for a period of 10 years.

With your permission, the meetings and observations will be recorded and transcribed within 8 weeks. If you would like to review a copy of the transcript for accuracy, please indicate this on the consent form.

### **Feedback**

You may also request a copy of the summary of the findings of this report on the consent form. This will be sent to you at the conclusion of the study.

Contact:

Researcher, Carolyn Davis. Doctoral Student, [cad254@bham.ac.uk](mailto:cad254@bham.ac.uk)

Supervisor, Dr Tracy Whatmore, [t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk](mailto:t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk)



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**Expression of interest to  
participate in research.**

Name .....

School .....

Role .....

I would like to be find out more about my school's involvement in your research project.  
Please contact me in the following way for further details (tick as many options as apply)

Telephone

Email

I understand that my school's participation in this research project is voluntary and that I  
may withdraw at any time if I decide to go ahead.

Signed .....

**Contact:**

Researcher, Carolyn Davis. Doctoral Student, [cad254@bham.ac.uk](mailto:cad254@bham.ac.uk)

Supervisor, Dr Tracy Whatmore, [t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk](mailto:t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk)





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## CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (HEADTEACHER)

**Thank you for agreeing to be part of this research project.**



I the undersigned voluntarily agree for **my school** to take part in this project and to personally participate in **interviews and meeting observations** on the leadership of school improvement and change in special schools which is being undertaken by a doctoral student of the University of Birmingham.

- I have read and understood the **Participant Information Sheet** provided. I have been given an explanation by the researcher of the study, and of what I will be expected to do. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions on all aspects of the study and have understood the advice and information given as a result.
- I understand that any information that is collected during interviews and through meeting observations will be stored in line with the University's strict guidelines, which protects the secure storage of all data in its original form for a period of 10 years (or up to 20 years where data is of major social, environmental or heritage importance).
- I understand that I will be able to withdraw **my school** from the project at any time during the research process without needing to justify my decision. If I withdraw from the study, I understand that my data, and any provided by my staff, will be destroyed.
- In the event of needing to complain, I understand that I should contact, in the first instance the researcher, Carolyn Davis, or in the event of this not being satisfactory, the researcher's supervisor, Dr Tracy Whatmore,
- I confirm that I have read and understood all of the above and freely consent to taking part in this study. I have been given enough time to consider whether I want to take part and agree to comply with the instructions of this study as explained by the researcher.
- I would like to be sent a summary of the research findings upon conclusion of the research project.

Name (Please print) \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact:**

Researcher, Carolyn Davis. Doctoral Student, [cad254@bham.ac.uk](mailto:cad254@bham.ac.uk)

Supervisor, Dr Tracy Whatmore, [t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk](mailto:t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk)

## Appendix B

Recruitment questionnaire pack: invitation to participate, respondent information sheet and consent form.



Dear Teacher

### Invitation to participate in research: recruitment questionnaire.

I am a research student at the University of Birmingham, studying for an EdD in Leaders and Leadership in Education. Your head teacher has kindly agreed to allow me to ask for your participation in the research project that I will be completing for my thesis. Through my research I want to find out about the perspectives and experiences of leaders, including teacher leaders, of leadership in special education.

I would like to invite you to nominate up to 3 teachers at your school who you would go to for professional advice if needed. These may or may not be individuals who hold a formal leadership position. I will then invite those nominated most frequently to take part further in my research project. All participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Your privacy and anonymity will be protected in completing this questionnaire.

I have attached a **Respondent Information Sheet** which covers key information about the conduct of the project. If you would like to take part in this research project, please complete the **consent form** and **questionnaire** attached.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and complete the questionnaire below

Kind regards

Carolyn Davis.

Contact:

Researcher, Carolyn Davis, Doctoral Student, [cad254@bham.ac.uk](mailto:cad254@bham.ac.uk)

Supervisor, Dr Tracy Whatmore, [t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk](mailto:t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk)



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## RESPONDENT INFORMATION SHEET (Recruitment Questionnaire)

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### Background

You are invited to take part in this research project, which is part of my doctoral programme of study – Leaders and Leadership in Education Doctorate EdD – at the University of Birmingham. Before you decide, please take a moment to read the following and do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

### What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of my study is to explore the experiences and perceptions of leaders in special schools in managing change and securing school improvement. The study will include leaders at all levels within the school, including head teachers, middle leaders and class teachers.

### Who has reviewed the study?

The study has been submitted to the University of Birmingham Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Review Committee for approval.

### Why have I been chosen?

We invite your participation in this stage of the research as we seek information from key staff in identifying leaders in your school.

### What does participation involve?

If you agree to take part in this project, we will ask you to complete a single question recruitment questionnaire, nominating up to three teachers at your school who you would go to for professional advice. These may or may not be individuals who hold a formal leadership position. From your data we will then invite those nominated most frequently to take part further in our research project through interviews and observations.

Contact:

Researcher, Carolyn Davis. Doctoral Student, [cad254@bham.ac.uk](mailto:cad254@bham.ac.uk)

Supervisor, Dr Tracy Whatmore, [t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk](mailto:t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk)

**What will I get from this study?**

This may be an interesting opportunity for you to reflect on leadership. If you would like, I can provide a summary of my findings for you.

**Can I withdraw from the study?**

Your participation in this research project is entirely voluntary. However, because your questionnaire will be completed anonymously, this means that the data from the questionnaire will remain as part of the research but will not be identified as being from you.

**What if there is something I am not happy about?**

If you have any concerns please contact the researcher whose details follow. Should you wish to make a formal complaint, please contact my supervisor who will take the matter forward for you:

Dr Tracy Whatmore, [t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk](mailto:t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk)

**Good Practice and Research Quality**

All data remains confidential. Individual names or identifying features of schools will not be made available in any publication or to any organisation or to any individual. Any reference made to participants/schools will be via a code and described as either a teacher leader, middle leader or senior leader at a special school, the only exception to this being that transcripts may be shared with my supervisor at the University of Birmingham as part of the research process. Data will be stored securely in accordance with the University's Code of Practice for Research [http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/cods/docs/COP\\_Research](http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/cods/docs/COP_Research) for a period of 10 years.

**Feedback**

You may also request a copy of the summary of the findings of this report on the consent for

Contact:

Researcher, Carolyn Davis. Doctoral Student, [cad254@bham.ac.uk](mailto:cad254@bham.ac.uk)

Supervisor, Dr Tracy Whatmore, [t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk](mailto:t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk)



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## CONSENT FORM (RECRUITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE)



I the undersigned voluntarily agree to take part in the **recruitment questionnaire** stage of the research project on the leadership of school improvement and change in special schools which is being undertaken by a doctoral student of the University of Birmingham.

- I have read and understood the **Respondent Information Sheet** provided. I have been given an explanation by the researcher of the study, and of what I will be expected to do. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions on all aspects of the study and have understood the advice and information given as a result.
- I understand that any information that is collected on recruitment questionnaires will be stored in line with the University's strict guidelines, which protects the secure storage of all data in its original form for a period of 10 years (or up to 20 years where data is of major social, environmental or heritage importance).
- I understand that I will not be able to withdraw the questionnaire from the project once it has been submitted as all questionnaires will be completed anonymously, but I can withdraw from being further involved in project.
- In the event of needing to complain, I understand that I should contact, in the first instance the researcher, Carolyn Davis, or in the event of this not being satisfactory, the researcher's supervisor, Dr Tracy Whatmore.

### Contact:

Researcher, Carolyn Davis. Doctoral Student, [cad254@bham.ac.uk](mailto:cad254@bham.ac.uk)

Supervisor, Dr Tracy Whatmore, [t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk](mailto:t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk)

- I confirm that I have read and understood all of the above and freely consent to taking part in this study. I have been given enough time to consider whether I want to take part and agree to comply with the instructions of this study as explained by the researcher.
- I would like to be sent a summary of the research findings upon conclusion of the research project.

Name (Please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Role \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact:**

Researcher, Carolyn Davis, Doctoral Student, [cad254@bham.ac.uk](mailto:cad254@bham.ac.uk)

Supervisor, Dr Tracy Whatmore, [t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk](mailto:t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk)

## Appendix C

### Interview and observations pack: invitation to participate, participant information sheet and consent form.



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Date

Dear

#### INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH: INTERVIEW AND MEETING OBSERVATION

Following the recent recruitment questionnaire process I would like to invite you to take part in an interview about your perceptions and experiences in this area and observe (name of meeting) which you attend. The interview should take about 45 minutes. It will take place at a time and location convenient to you and will offer you the opportunity to reflect on your experience as a leader. It will include questions based on your experience at your school about

- Your role as a leader.
- How leadership and leaders are developed.
- The way in which colleagues work together professionally.
- Change and school development.
- The impact of leadership on school improvement and pupil outcomes.

I have attached a **Participant Information Sheet** which covers key information about the conduct of the project, which you should read carefully. If you would like to take part in this research project, please complete the **consent form** attached and return to me by email. I will then get back to you to arrange a convenient time for your interview. In the meanwhile, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Kind regards

Carolyn Davis

Contact:

Researcher, Carolyn Davis. Doctoral Student, [cad254@bham.ac.uk](mailto:cad254@bham.ac.uk)

Supervisor, Dr Tracy Whatmore, [t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk](mailto:t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk)





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## **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION (INTERVIEW AND MEETING OBSERVATION)**

### **Background**

You are invited to take part in this research project, which is part of my doctoral programme of study – Leaders and Leadership in Education Doctorate EdD – at the University of Birmingham. Before you decide to part, please take a moment to read the following and do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The aim of my study is to explore the experiences and perceptions of leaders in special schools in managing change and securing school improvement. The study will include leaders at all levels within the school, including head teachers, middle leaders and class teachers.

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

The study has been submitted to the University of Birmingham Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Review Committee for approval.

### **Why have I been chosen?**

We invite your participation in this stage of the research as you have been identified by your peers as an individual who exercises a leadership role in the school and will be in a position to reflect on your experiences and perceptions of managing change and securing school development

### **What does participation involve?**

If you agree to take part in this project, we will ask you to participate in an interview, at a time and location convenient to you, lasting about 45 minutes, reflecting on your leadership role in relation to change and school improvement. You will be given an information sheet with details of questions ahead of the interview via email. Following the interview, I would like to observe a meeting that you attend looking at the leadership of change and school improvement in action. You will have the opportunity to contact the researcher in advance to clarify any queries you may have.

Contact:

Researcher, Carolyn Davis. Doctoral Student, [cad254@bham.ac.uk](mailto:cad254@bham.ac.uk)

Supervisor, Dr Tracy Whatmore, [t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk](mailto:t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk)

### **What will I get from this study?**

This may be an interesting opportunity for you to reflect on your leadership role. If you would like, I can provide a summary of my findings for you.

### **Can I withdraw from the study?**

Your participation in this research project is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time during the research without question. Any request to withdraw should be put in writing to the researcher whose details are provided below. Following your withdrawal from the study, any information you already provided will not be used in analysis or final report, and any record of the data you provided will subsequently be destroyed.

### **What if there is something I am not happy about?**

If you have any concerns please contact the researcher whose details follow. Should you wish to make a formal complaint, please contact my supervisory team who will take the matter forward for you:

Dr Tracy Whatmore, [t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk](mailto:t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk)

### **Good Practice and Research Quality**

All data remains confidential. Individual names or identifying features of schools will not be made available in any publication or to any organisation or to any individual. Any reference made to participants/schools will be via a code and described as either a teacher leader, middle leader or senior leader at a special school, the only exception to this being that transcripts may be shared with my supervisor at the University of Birmingham as part of the research process. Data will be stored securely in accordance with the University's Code of Practice for Research [http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/cods/docs/COP\\_Research](http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/cods/docs/COP_Research) for a period of 10 years.

With your permission, the interview and observation will be recorded and transcribed within 8 weeks. If you would like to review a copy of the transcript for accuracy, please indicate this on the consent form.

### **Feedback**

You may also request a copy of the summary of the findings of this report on the consent form. This will be sent to you at the conclusion of the study.

Contact:

Researcher, Carolyn Davis. Doctoral Student, [cad254@bham.ac.uk](mailto:cad254@bham.ac.uk)

Supervisor, Dr Tracy Whatmore, [t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk](mailto:t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk)



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## CONSENT FORM (INTERVIEWS AND MEETING OBSERVATION)

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this research project.



I the undersigned voluntarily agree to take part in the **interviews and meeting observations** on the leadership of school improvement and change in special schools which is being undertaken by a doctoral student of the University of Birmingham.

- I have read and understood the **Participant Information Sheet** provided. I have been given an explanation by the researcher of the study, and of what I will be expected to do. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions on all aspects of the study and have understood the advice and information given as a result.
- I understand that any information that is collected during interviews and through meeting observations will be stored in line with the University's strict guidelines, which protects the secure storage of all data in its original form for a period of 10 years (or up to 20 years where data is of major social, environmental or heritage importance).
- I understand that I will be able to withdraw from the project at any time during the research process without needing to justify my decision. If I withdraw from the study, I understand that my data will be destroyed.
- In the event of needing to complain, I understand that I should contact, in the first instance the researcher, Carolyn Davis, or in the event of this not being satisfactory, the researcher's supervisor, Dr Tracy Whatmore.

Contact:

Researcher, Carolyn Davis. Doctoral Student, [cad254@bham.ac.uk](mailto:cad254@bham.ac.uk)

Supervisor, Dr Tracy Whatmore, [t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk](mailto:t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk)

- I confirm that I have read and understood all of the above and freely consent to taking part in this study. I have been given enough time to consider whether I want to take part and agree to comply with the instructions of this study as explained by the researcher.
- I would like to be sent a summary of the research findings upon conclusion of the research project

Name (Please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Role: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact:

Researcher, Carolyn Davis. Doctoral Student, [cad254@bham.ac.uk](mailto:cad254@bham.ac.uk)

Supervisor, Dr Tracy Whatmore, [t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk](mailto:t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk)

## Appendix D

### Observation pack: invitation to participate, participant information sheet and consent form



Date

Dear (Observee name)

#### **INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH: MEETING OBSERVATION**

Following the recent recruitment questionnaire process I will be interviewing one of your colleagues as part of this research project. I would also like to observe (name of meeting) which both you and s/he attends on (date).

I have attached a **Participant Information Sheet** which covers key information about the conduct of the project and the observation process, which you should read carefully. If you would like to take part in this research project, please complete the **consent form** attached and return to me by email. In the meanwhile, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Kind regards

Carolyn Davis.

Contact:

Researcher, Carolyn Davis. Doctoral Student, [cad254@bham.ac.uk](mailto:cad254@bham.ac.uk)

Supervisor, Dr Tracy Whatmore, [t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk](mailto:t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk)



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## **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (MEETING OBSERVATION)**

---

### **Background**

You are invited to take part in this research project, which is part of my doctoral programme of study – Leaders and Leadership in Education Doctorate EdD – at the University of Birmingham. Before you decide to part, please take a moment to read the following and do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The aim of my study is to explore the experiences and perceptions of leaders in special schools in managing change and securing school improvement. The study will include leaders at all levels within the school, including head teachers, middle leaders and class teachers.

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

The study has been submitted to the University of Birmingham Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Review Committee for approval.

### **Why have I been chosen?**

I would like to observe (name of meeting) that you attend, which is also attended by one of your colleagues (name), who was identified by her/his peers as having a leadership role in the school.

### **What does participation involve?**

If you agree to take part in this project, you will be observed as a participant of (name of meeting) which is also attended by one of your peers (name) who has been identified by her/his peers as having a leadership role in the school. As researcher I will not participate in the meeting in any way. You will have the opportunity to contact the researcher in advance to clarify any queries you may have.

Contact:

Researcher, Carolyn Davis. Doctoral Student, [cad254@bham.ac.uk](mailto:cad254@bham.ac.uk)

Supervisor, Dr Tracy Whatmore, [t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk](mailto:t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk)

### **What will I get from this study?**

This may be an interesting opportunity for you to reflect on your contributions to leadership. If you would like, I can provide a summary of my findings for you.

### **Can I withdraw from the study?**

Your participation in this research project is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time during the research without question. Any request to withdraw should be put in writing to the researcher whose details are provided below. Following your withdrawal from the study, any information you already provided will not be used in analysis or final report, and any record of the data you provided will subsequently be destroyed.

### **What if there is something I am not happy about?**

If you have any concerns please contact the researcher whose details follow. Should you wish to make a formal complaint, please contact my supervisory team who will take the matter forward for you:

Dr Tracy Whatmore, [t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk](mailto:t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk)

### **Good Practice and Research Quality**

All data remains confidential. Individual names or identifying features of schools will not be made available in any publication or to any organisation or to any individual. Any reference made to participants/schools will be via a code and described as either a teacher leader, middle leader or senior leader at a special school, the only exception to this being that transcripts may be shared with my supervisor at the University of Birmingham as part of the research process. Data will be stored securely in accordance with the University's Code of Practice for Research [http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/cods/docs/COP\\_Research](http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/cods/docs/COP_Research) for a period of 10 years.

With your permission, the observation will be recorded and transcribed within 8 weeks. If you would like to review a copy of the transcript for accuracy, please indicate this on the consent form.

### **Feedback**

You may also request a copy of the summary of the findings of this report on the consent form. This will be sent to you at the conclusion of the study

Contact:

Researcher, Carolyn Davis. Doctoral Student, [cad254@bham.ac.uk](mailto:cad254@bham.ac.uk)

Supervisor, Dr Tracy Whatmore, [t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk](mailto:t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk)



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## CONSENT FORM (MEETING OBSERVATIONS)

### Thank you for agreeing to be part of this research

I the undersigned voluntarily agree to take part in the **meeting observation** on the leadership of school improvement and change in special schools which is being undertaken by a doctoral student of the University of Birmingham.

- I have read and understood the **Participant Information Sheet** provided. I have been given an explanation by the researcher of the study, and of what I will be expected to do. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions on all aspects of the study and have understood the advice and information given as a result.
- I understand that any information that is collected during interviews and through meeting observations will be stored in line with the University's strict guidelines, which protects the secure storage of all data in its original form for a period of 10 years (or up to 20 years where data is of major social, environmental or heritage importance).
- I understand that I will be able to withdraw from project at any time during the research process without needing to justify my decision. If I withdraw from the study, I understand that my data will be destroyed.
- In the event of needing to complain, I understand that I should contact, in the first instance the researcher, Carolyn Davis, or in the event of this not being satisfactory, the researcher's supervisor, Dr Tracy Whatmore.

Contact:

Researcher, Carolyn Davis. Doctoral Student, [cad254@bham.ac.uk](mailto:cad254@bham.ac.uk)

Supervisor, Dr Tracy Whatmore, [t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk](mailto:t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk)



- I confirm that I have read and understood all of the above and freely consent to taking part in this study. I have been given enough time to consider whether I want to take part and agree to comply with the instructions of this study as explained by the researcher.
- I would like to be sent a summary of the research findings upon conclusion of the research project.

Name (Please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Role \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Contact:

Researcher, Carolyn Davis. Doctoral Student, [cad254@bham.ac.uk](mailto:cad254@bham.ac.uk)

Supervisor, Dr Tracy Whatmore,

## Appendix E

### Recruitment questionnaire



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION AND  
SOCIAL JUSTICE

## RESEARCH RECRUITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Please name below up to 3 colleagues that you would be most likely to go to for professional advice, if needed

Names of colleagues.	Role	Type of professional advice for which I would approach individual.

#### Contact:

Researcher, Carolyn Davis, Doctoral Student, [cad254@bham.ac.uk](mailto:cad254@bham.ac.uk)

Supervisor, Dr Tracy Whatmore, [t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk](mailto:t.whatmore@bham.ac.uk)

## Appendix F

### Interview Schedules

#### Interview schedule for Headteachers

1. Tell me about your role as the Headteacher at this school?
2. What are your views on Distributed Leadership?
3. How do you see your role in developing leadership in others?
4. a) How much autonomy do other leaders in the school have to make decisions in their areas of responsibility?  
  
b) Do they contribute to decision-making at whole school level? If so how?  
  
c) In your experience, how does this work alongside the pressures of accountability for headteachers?
5. How would you describe the culture of the school?
6. What are the main challenges for the school at the moment?
7. a) From you experience can you tell me about change and development at this school?  
  
b) How are change and development needs identified?
8. What benefit, if any, do you see for the distribution of leadership at this school?
9. Do you see any disadvantages or negative outcomes to the way that leadership has been distributed at this school?
10. From your experience, do you think that developments in teaching and learning practice can be linked to the distribution of leadership at this school?
11. From your experience do you think pupil outcomes can be linked to distributed leadership at this school?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add?

## Interview Schedule

### **Interview schedule senior, middle and teacher leaders**

1. Tell me about yourself as a leader at the school?
2. What are your views on Distributed Leadership?
3. a) How much freedom do you have to make decisions and take initiatives in your area of responsibility?  
b) Do you input into leadership beyond your area or responsibility?
4. What do you see the role of the Headteacher to be in leading this school?
5. How do you see the role of the Headteacher in developing and supporting leadership in others?
6. a) How would you describe the culture of the school?  
b) Can you describe the way you work with colleagues, whether that's teachers or other leaders?
7. From your experience can you tell me about change and development at this school?
8. What benefit, if any, do you see for the distribution of leadership at this school?
9. Do you see any disadvantages or negative outcomes to the way that leadership has been distributed at this school?
10. From your experience, do you think that developments in teaching and learning practice can be linked to the distribution of leadership at this school?
11. From your experience, do you think pupil outcomes can be linked to the development of distributed leadership at this school?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for your help.

## Appendix G

### Observation recording proforma

Observation proforma for field notes to support audio recording of meeting.

<b>Context:</b> <b>Name of group:</b> <b>Aims and purpose of meeting:</b> <b>Minute taker</b> <b>Chair</b>
<b>Attendees and roles:</b>
<b>Room/seating plan : (Complete on reverse)</b>
<b>Agenda item</b>
<b>Field notes on nonverbal communication and cues eg emotional outbursts, body language, facial expressions or other relevant information to supplement audio recording</b>

## Appendix H: Tables 22-25

**Table 22: Patterns of distribution based on MacBeath (2005)**

School	Phase	Supporting evidence	Evidence
School 3	Formal Distribution: Phase 1: Early Stages of Headship	HT in early years of headship	Int.
		Hierarchical Mini-Schools leadership structure put in place by HT with distribution through formal roles. Clear lines of accountability and communication through scheduled team meetings and co-ordinated 1:1 meetings, in which the HT sets the agenda and monitors progress. Development priorities, led by the HT, co-ordinated through SST meetings and fed down systematically to middle leaders and then teachers through the meeting structure.	Int. Int./Obs. Int./Obs.
School 2	Cultural Distribution Phase 3 :Sustainability	<b>Elements of Development and Transformation. Early Phase 2:</b> Awareness of shared leadership developed through consultation following Workplace Survey. Whole school leadership training through formalised bespoke process. Peer-to-peer learning encouraged through meeting structure. HT expressed desire for greater empowerment and distribution.	Int./Obs. Int./Obs. Int. Int. Int.
		Clear ethos, culture and strong sense of community focused on meeting the needs of the children. 'Consensual' approach.	Int./Obs.
		Instances of bottom-up leadership: senior teaching assistants approached the head informally to set up an NVQ centre at the school.	Int.
		Informality and flexibility of processes: formal and informal leaders work together to review class teams, through scheduled SMT meeting and <i>ad hoc</i> meeting.	Int./Obs.
		HT happy to follow as well as lead, taking instructions from support staff on feeding issues based on expertise.	Int.
		HT happy to 'let go'.	Int./Obs.
		Encourages risk taking: SL1 empowered to 'shake up' class teams.	Int./Obs.
		High levels of trust – staff feel listened to by HT.	Int./Obs.
		High levels of support from HT and teams: Outreach Team support each other and supported by HT	Int./Obs.
		High levels of autonomy: Assistant Heads create own job descriptions; TL1 introduces Sensology.	Int./Obs.
Strong relationships but threatened by move.	Int./Obs.		
Highly motivated staff and low staff turnover.	Int./Obs.		
Senior Leaders and HT listen to, support and are accessible through open door policy.	Int.		
Staff accountable through responsibility, Head shares accountability with SMT, but has final say.	Int./Obs. Int./Obs.		
CPD opportunities through formal training, master's degrees.	Int.		
<b>Elements of Phase 2</b> HT asks AHO to lead on aspects of the Soft Federation; HT asks ML1 and AHO to work with him on drawing up a response to the Rochford Review.	Int.		

School 1	Incremental Distribution: Phase 2: Development and Transformation	<p>HT enables staff to input ideas and participate in decision-making through Assessment Groups and E-Mentors.  HT sees his role as encouraging teachers to lead whilst ensuring that this is in line with the school vision: Peer training sessions.  HT develops learning culture through research groups: E-Mentors.  Teachers trained in leadership through training and mentoring colleagues and peer lesson observations.</p> <p><b>Elements of Phase 1:</b> Hierarchical structure.  <b>Elements of Phase 3:</b> SL1 sees teacher input into new assessment system as a dialogue between equals.  <i>Ad hoc</i> collaboration between therapist and teachers.  Expectation that teachers train peers when they have a good idea.</p>	<p>Int./Obs.  Int.  Int./Obs.  Int./Obs.    Int./Obs.  Int.    Int.  Int.</p>
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**Table 23: Indicators of distribution using Ritchie and Woods (2007, p.372) framework**

Ritchie and Woods, (2007 ) indicators of distribution	School 1	School 2	School 3
School has explicit values, ethos and aims	Green	Green	Green
Collaborative culture with structures to foster collaboration and teamwork	Green	Green	Green
Staff are challenged and motivated	Green	Green	Orange
Staff identify as learners	Green	Green	Orange
Staff feel valued	Green	Green	Orange
Staff feel trusted and well supported by the Headteacher	Green	Green	Green
Staff feel ownership of school vision.	Green	Green	Green
Staff involved in creating, developing and sharing collective vision	Green	Green	Green
Staff aware of talents and the school's impact on their leadership potential.	Green	Green	Green
Staff relish responsibilities and opportunities given.	Green	Green	Orange
Staff feel supported and enabled to take risks	Green	Green	Orange
Staff appreciate the high degree of autonomy they have	Green	Green	Orange

**Key:**


Clear/ Strong evidence of a factor found

Limited evidence of a factor found

No evidence/counter evidence of a factor found

**Ratings continua (Bennett *et al.*, 2003)**

<b>Hierarchical organisation</b>				
<b>Hierarchical</b>	3	1	2	<b>Non-hierarchical</b>
<b>Control and autonomy</b>				
<b>Control</b>	3	1	2	<b>Autonomy</b>
<b>Sources of change and development</b>				
<b>External/top-down</b>	3	1	2	<b>Internal/bottom-up</b>
<b>Positional or informal leadership</b>				
<b>Positional</b>	3	1	2	<b>Informal</b>
<b>Institutional or spontaneous forms of DL</b>				
<b>Institutional</b>	3	1	2	<b>Spontaneous</b>

**Key:** 1= School 1      2= School 2      3=School 3

**Overall degrees of distribution:**

School	Degree of distribution
1	Embedded
2	Embedded
3	Emerging



**Table 24: Elements of Collaborative Leadership based on Telford (1996)**

Schools	Structural Frame	Human Resources Frame	Political Frame	Symbolic Frame
School 1	<p>Input to decisions through meetings. High leadership density through proactive TL. All class teachers are leaders. Shared vision around needs of young people with autism. Shared planning. Headteacher approachable/listens. Formal roles. Headteacher co-ordinates in line with vision and reserves right of veto.</p>	<p>Use of inquiry/research to improve teacher and learning for pupils with complex needs. CPD and career development has high priority. High peer and leadership support for teachers. Teachers lead training and mentoring for peers. Focus on improvement. Strong professional and social relationships between staff.</p>	<p>Input into decision-making reaching consensus through discussion, but Headteacher has final say. Departmental identities and cultures but allied to school vision. Open communication through range of media. Disagreements raised at SMT accepted as part of process. Strong professional and social relationships between staff.</p>	<p>Collaboration and sharing are the norm. Ethos of teamwork. Staff refer to 'The School 1 way.'</p>
School 2	<p>Democratic processes through meeting schedule. All class teachers are leaders. High leadership density through TL. Shared vision on meeting pupil needs. Policies underpin processes. Headteacher has open door policy and staff feel listened to. Headteacher co-ordinates but reserves right of veto and makes this clear. Accountability seen as responsibility.</p>	<p>High pupil attainment has highest priority. Strong sense of community with little staff turnover. Professional development encouraged through courses and peer-to-peer learning. High support and levels of trust from headteacher and between staff. Strong staff cohesion.</p>	<p>'Flat' staffing structure. Headteacher has vision but it develops organically through SMT. Teachers input into school development through SIP groups. Open discussion and consultation through staff meetings reaching consensus. Headteacher uses authority as required. Subgroups exist amongst support staff in response to change threatening relationships.</p>	<p>Strong focus on needs of the child as principal driver. Pervasive school culture described as 'another country'. Headteacher/Senior leaders 'open door' policy during the school day is central to school life.</p>
School 3	<p>Staff consultation through meeting structure. All class teachers are leaders. Shared vision around meeting needs of child. Formal roles. Listening through formal roles within accountability.</p>	<p>Focus on teaching and learning and raising standards. CPD encouraged. Teachers work closely with parents in agreeing pupil targets. High levels of trust reported. Sharing of good practice through meetings schedule. Informal support between teachers.</p>	<p>Teachers consulted and open discussion invited the Headteacher. Decision often based on consensus through leadership structure, but headteacher observed to decline requests.</p>	<p>Shared language: 'working alongsides' refers to coaching. Staff refer to 'The School 3 way'.</p>

**Table 25: Analysis of empowerment using Woods (2016) conceptualisation of authority.**

School	Social authority
School 3	<b>Rational authority:</b> hierarchical Mini-Schools model is dominant form of distribution with strong systems base . Staff allocated posts on basis of expertise assessed by HT within the hierarchy.
	<b>Community authority:</b> headteacher is engaged in building community authority through training which works on team building and development of Mini-School teams; she encourages social events to build relationships; shared values around meeting pupil needs.
	<b>Democratic authority:</b> Decisions legitimated through SST collaboratively. SMT involves middle leaders. Staff are consulted, but there is not yet congruence between the Headteacher’ view of democratic authority and that of staff. Staff are supported in taking Master’s Courses to self -develop. Peer-to-peer learning through formal sharing of good practice.
	<b>Interior authority:</b> Individuals bring forward ideas based on their knowledge. The Headteacher is the dominant interior authority. She drives the vision and changes in leadership through her own views. She would like greater democratic involvement in the future in school development.
School 2	<b>Rational authority:</b> Flat hierarchy with only one middle leader.
	<b>Community authority:</b> Strong social relationships within the school community; sense of community based on shared child centred ethos; Headteacher held in high esteem by staff, who in turn are trusted and respected by Headteacher.
	<b>Democratic authority:</b> High level of consensual decision-making through SMT, staff meetings and <i>ad hoc</i> meetings which is part of the school culture. Staff are involved in school development through SIP groups and expect to be involved in decision-making. Developmental democracy through encouragement to take master’s courses. Open classrooms and collaborative learning between staff. Headteacher makes clear that he may consult staff, but he will make the final decision.
	<b>Interior authority:</b> Individual staff influence change through TL, by bringing forward ideas. Headteacher drives vision and has the final say in decisions. He drives leadership style through his experience within the school through extended period as Deputy.
School 1	<b>Rational authority:</b> hierarchical structure which functions beside informal leadership, notably Teacher Leadership.
	<b>Community authority:</b> strong social relationships amongst staff; shared norms around multidisciplinary working, collaborative inquiry, collaborative practice and teamworking. Shared values around approaches to autism. Community authority is encouraged by Headteacher through the provision of structures such as E-Mentors. Mutual respect between staff and Headteacher, who provides inspiration, reflecting congruence of values.
	<b>Democratic authority:</b> Decisions made through SLT, SMT and staff meetings. Headteacher instrumental in asking for input to SMT meetings where staff impact on decisions. Staff are involved in school development through working groups eg assessment, where they have the power to influence outcomes. Developmental democracy through encouragement of individual CPD such as Masters courses. Headteacher sets out ‘red lines’
	<b>Interior authority:</b> High level of teacher leadership based on individual initiatives, which is encouraged by the Headteacher. Headteacher makes and drives the vision based on his experience within the school.

## Appendix I

### Data Coding

Data codes start list (based on Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 58)

<b>ROLE (Question 1)</b>	
ROLE: CAREER PATH AND CONTEXT	ROL/CPC
ROLE: DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ROLE	ROL/DEV
<b>VIEWS ON DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP (Question 2)</b>	
DL: HEADTEACHER INITIATES	DL/HTI
DL: BENEFITS	DL/BEN
DL: DISADVANTAGES	DL/DISAD
<b>EMPOWERMENT (Question 3)</b>	
EMP: FORMAL AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY	EMP/OA
EMP: INPUT INTO WHOLE SCHOOL ISSUES	EMP/WS
EMP: EMPOWERMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY	EMP/ACC
EMP: TEACHER LEADERSHIP	EMP/TL
EMP: TRUST	EMP/TR
<b>ROLE OF HEADTEACHER (Question 4 and 5)</b>	
HT: DECISION-MAKING	HT/DM
HT: USE AND DEVELOPMENT OF STRUCTURES	HT/STR
HT: USE OF ROUTINES	HT/ROUT
HT: POWER	HT/POW
HT: DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP IN OTHERS	HT/DLO
HT: SUPPORT	HT/SUP
HT: COMMUNICATION	HT/COMM
HT: CO-ORDINATION	HT/CO-ORD
<b>CULTURE (Question 6)</b>	
CULT: COLLABORATION	CULT/COLL
CULT: TEAMWORK	CULT/TEAM
CULT: REALATIONSHIPS AND SOCIAL CAPITAL	CULT/RELSC
CULT: SUPPORT	CULT/SUPP
<b>SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND CHANGE (Question 7)</b>	
SIC: DRIVERS OF CHANGE	SIC/DRIV
SIC: IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS	SIC/IP
SIC: SCHOOL CONTEXT	SIC/CON

OUTCOMES OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP (Questions 8-11)	
OUT: BENEFITS	OUT: BEN
OUT: DISADVANTAGES	OUT: DISAD
OUT: CAPACITY BUILDING	OUT/CB
OUT: KNOWLEDGE CREATION	OUT/KC
OUT: BENEFITS TO TEACHING AND LEARNING	OUT/TANDL
OUT: IMPROVED PUPIL OUTCOMES	OUT/PO

**Coding list updated in the light of participant responses.**

ROLE (Question 1)	
ROLE: CAREER PATH (LISTED)	ROL/CP (LISTED)
ROLE: SCHOOL CONTEXT	ROL/CON
ROLE: DEVELOPMENT IN ROLE (STRATEGY LISTED)	ROL/DEV/ (LISTED)
VIEWS ON DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP (Question 2)	
DL: HEADTEACHER INITIATES	DL/HTI
DL: TEACHERS INITIATE LEADERSHIP	DL/TLI
DL: FORMAL	DL/FORM
DL: INFORMAL	DL/INF
DL: TRUST-BASED RELATIONSHIPS	DL/ REL/TR
DL: STRENGTHENS TEAMS	DL/REL/TEAMS
DL: COLLEAGUES AND SENIOR LEADERS SUPPORT	DL/SUPP
DL: USES AND SHARES EXPERTISE	DL/USE.SH.EXP
DL: SUPPORTS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT	DL/SI
DL: MOTIVATES THROUGH INVOLVEMENT	DL/MOT
DL: COLLABORATION	DL/COLL
DL: EMPOWERMENT	DL/EMP
DL: ACCOUNTABILITY	DL/ACC
DL: SUPPORTS HEADTEACHER'S WORKLOAD	DL/HT.WKL
DL: CAN BETTER MEET PUPIL NEEDS	DL/PN
EMPOWERMENT (Question 3)	
EMP: FORMAL AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (LISTED)	EMP/OA/(LISTED)
EMP: INPUT INTO WHOLE SCHOOL ISSUES (LISTED)	EMP/WS/(LISTED)
EMP: ACCOUNTABILITY	EMP/ACC
EMP: AUTONOMY	EMP/AUT
EMP: TRUST AND RELATIONSHIPS	EMP/TR+REL
EMP: BOUNDED EMPOWERMENT BY HEADTEACHER	EMP/BOHT
EMP: BOUNDED EMPOWERMENT BY PEERS	EMP: BOP
EMP: THROUGH MEETINGS	EMP/MEET
EMP: WORKING GROUPS	EMP/WG

ROLE OF HEADTEACHER (Questions 4 and 5)	
HT: DECISION-MAKING	HT/DEC
HT: VISION	HT/VIS
HT: USE AND DEVELOPMENT OF STRUCTURES	HT/STR
HT: USE AND DEVELOPMENT OF ROUTINES	HT/ROUT
HT: POWER	HT/POW
HT: DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP IN OTHERS (LISTED)	HT/DLO/(LISTED)
HT: SUPPORTIVE TRUST-BASED RELATIONSHIPS	HT/SUP.REL.TR
HT: COMMUNICATION	HT/COMM
HT: CO-ORDINATION	HT/CO-ORD
HT: SETS STANDARDS	HT/STAND
HT: KNOWS STAFF STRENGTHS	HT/KNOWST
HT: ACCOUNTABILITY	HT/ACC
HT: SENIOR TEAMS	HT/ST
HT: POWER	HT: POW
CULTURE (Question 6)	
CULT: POSITIVE DESCRIPTORS	CULT/POS
CULT: COLLABORATION	CULT/COLL
CULT: TEAMWORK	CULT/TEAM
CULT: POSITIVE REALATIONSHIPS /SOCIAL CAPITAL	CULT/RELSC
CULT: SUPPORT COLLEAGUES	CULT/SUPPCOLL
CULT: TRUST	CULT/TR
CULT: TEACHER LEADERSHIP	CULT/TL
CULT: PUPIL NEEDS AS CORE VALUE	CULT/PN
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND CHANGE (Question 7)	
SIC: SCHOOL GROWTH	SIC/SG (IMPACT LISTED)
SIC: DRIVERS OF CHANGE (LISTED)	SIC/DRIV (LISTED)
SIC: OUTCOMES OF CHANGE (LISTED)	SIC/OUTCH (LISTED)
SIC: IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS (LISTED)	SIC/IP (LISTED)
SIC: SCHOOL CONTEXT AND CHANGE (LISTED)	SIC/CON (LISTED)
OUTCOMES OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP (Questions 8-11)	
OUT: CAPACITY BUILDING	OUT/BEN/CB
OUT: KNOWLEDGE CREATION	OUT/BEN/KC
OUT: NEW TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES	OUT/BEN/TANDL
OUT: IMPROVED PUPIL OUTCOMES	OUT/BEN/PO
OUT: INCREASED STAFF MOTIVATION	OUT/BEN/MOT
OUT: STAFF EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES	OUT/BEN/EXP
OUT: OTHER BENEFITS (LISTED)	OUT/BEN (LISTED)
OUT: INCREASED WORKLOAD	OUT/DISAD/WK
OUT: LACK OF CO-ORDINATION	OUT/DISAD/CO-ORD
OUT: OTHER DISADVANTAGES (LISTED)	OUT/ DISAD (LISTED)

Sample data sheet:

School 1 ML2

<b>ROLE</b>
ROL/CP/TRAINED AND PROMOTED IN SCHOOL ROL/DEV/TRAINS STAFF ROL/DEV/COACHES STAFF
<b>VIEWS ON DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP</b>
DL/HTI DL/INF DL/FORM DL/SUPP
<b>EMPOWERMENT</b>
EMP/OA/SETS DIARY EMP/OA/DETERMINES TRAINING EMP/OA/EMPOWERED AS COLLABORATIVE TEAM EMP/WS/MEMBER OF SMT
<b>ROLE OF HEADTEACHER</b>
HT/STAND HT/SUP.REL.TR HT/VIS/INSPIRES HT/DEC HT/ACC HT/STR HT/DLO/DISTRIBUTES STAFF TRAINING THROUGH ROLE HT/DLO/DISTRIBUTES STAFF COACHING THROUGH ROLE
<b>CULTURE</b>
CULT/POS CULT/TEAM CULT/SUPPCOLL CULT/COLL/WITH PLANNING CULT/COLL/ENCOURAGED BY SMT CULT/TR
<b>SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND CHANGE</b>
SIC/SG/THREAT TO CORE VALUES SIC/SG/CAREER OPPORTUNITIES SIC/SG/THREATENES RELATIONSHIPS SIC/DRIV/OFSTED SIC/DRIV/NAS ACCREDITATION

SIC/DRIV/PN
<b>OUTCOMES OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP</b>
OUT/BEN/SUPPORT
OUT/BEN/CB
OUT/BEN/MOT
OUT/BEN/EXP
OUT/DISAD/UNCLEAR ACCOUNTABILITY

### Sample sheet for identification of themes (School 2)

VIEWS ON DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP						
References to participant transcripts						
HT pp7-9	SL1 pp.3-5	SL2 pp2-3	ML1 pp.2-3	TL1 pp.6-7	TL2 pp.5-6	TL3 pp3-4
Participant	Codes			Broad themes (see key below)		
HT	DL/HT.WKL			1		
	DL/REL/TR/ACC			2		
	DL/EMP			2		
SL1	DL/TR/ACC			2		
	DL/SUPP/INF			1		
	DL/SUPP/FORM			1		
SL2	DL/EMP/MOT			1		
	DL.INF			3		
	DL/HTI			3		
ML1	DL/COLL/SH.EXP			1		
	DL/REL/TEAMS			1		
	DL/SI			1		
	DL/HTI			3		
	DL/TL			3		
TL1	DL/COLL/ USE.SH.EXP			1		
	DL/EMP/MOT			1		
TL2	DL/COLL/USE.SH.EXP			1		
	DL/MOT/THROUGH CHALLENGE			1		
TL3	DL/REL/TRUST			2		
	DL/ACC /BOUNDED			2		
	DL/EMP/INTERESTS INFORM DEVELOPMENT			2		

Broad themes	Number
Empowerment gives ownership, motivates staff and maximises strength of team.	1
Trust and accountability	2
Led and initiated by Headteacher, groups and individuals.	3